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ABSTRACT

This booklet about the cultural background of Vietnam is one of three booklets that serve as a foundation for understanding the cultural diversity and values of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese students. Vietnam is located on the eastern coast of the Indochinese peninsula and has a population of 56 million. Its history is divided into the following periods: (1) Prehistoric; (2) Chinese domination; (3) the Era of Independence; and (4) French domination. The Vietnamese focuses his concerns on the family and maintaining inner harmony. A Vietnamese is always addressed by his given name and referred to by his full name, but never by his family name alone. Family structure is complex and roles and relationships are clearly defined. Family and social relationships are based on mutual respect. The Vietnamese language is composed of three different dialects. Prior to French conquest, Vietnam was a monarchy. Since 1954, there has been constant political conflict between communist and republican interests. The economy is essentially agricultural. The Vietnamese relates to nature on an emotional level. His value system is based on allegiance to family, yearning for a good name, love of learning, and respect for others. The highly centralized elementary, secondary, and higher education system has focused on political indoctrination since the communist take-over of South Vietnam. Twelve charts, two maps, and an outline of Vietnamese history are included. A description of the new year celebration is also included. A 28-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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HUYNH DINH TE

INTRODUCTION to VIETNAMESE CULTURE

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Chapter I

THE PHYSICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING OF VIETNAMESE CULTURE

PHYSICAL SETTING

Vietnam is situated on the eastern coast of the Indochinese peninsula, extending from the China border in the north to the Gulf of Thailand in the south. To the west, Vietnam borders with Cambodia and Laos; to the east, lies the South China Sea. The history and cultural characteristics of Vietnam owe much to its geographical position. It is at the crossroads of two major Asian cultures: the Chinese culture from the north and the Indian culture from the west.

Situated between 8°33' and 23°22' latitude north, Vietnam is a country of 127,000 square miles (slightly smaller than Japan and a little larger than the United Kingdom). North Vietnam is characterized by a mountainous terrain interspersed with deep valleys, the most important of which is that of the Red River Delta. Central Vietnam is a long narrow corridor between the Trường-Sơn Mountain and the sea, made up of a series of small coastal plains. Southern Vietnam is a flat country formed by the Mekong Delta which is the most productive agricultural area in Vietnam.

Vietnam is essentially a tropical country with varied climate. In the north there are four distinct seasons while in the center and the south there are only two seasons: the dry season and the rainy season. The rains are relatively abundant throughout the country. The average annual rainfall is 58.5 inches.

The population of Vietnam is about 56 million with the majority living in the lowlands. The ethnic and geographical origins of the Vietnamese people are still a matter of controversy. The common theory is that the Vietnamese resulted from a mixture of the Viet tribes from the Yang Tse Kiang valley in China and the inhabitants of the Red River Delta originally coming from Indonesia. There are several ethnic minorities in Vietnam; the most important ones are Chinese, Mountain tribesmen and Cambodians.

The Chinese are the largest minority, about one million and a half before 1975, with a large concentration in the Chinatown of Cholon in South Vietnam. They play a predominant role in the economic life of the country. The second largest minority is the mountain tribesmen, about one million people, belonging to more than 30 different tribes of the Malayo-Polynesian and Mon-

Khmer ethnic stocks. In the mountainous regions of North Vietnam live the Thái, the Mán, the Mèo, the Mường, the Nùng, and the Lolo tribes. In the mountainous regions of Central Vietnam there are the Rhadé, the Bahnar, Jarai, the Stieng tribes, etc. The Chams (who once formed a strong empire in what now is Central Vietnam) live in the lowlands of the southern part of Central Vietnam and number about 20,000 people. The third largest minority is the Cambodians, numbering about 700,000, and living in the provinces near the Cambodian border. Other smaller ethnic groups are Malays, Indians, Pakistanis, and French. Most of these ethnic groups left Vietnam in 1975.

HISTORICAL SETTING

Vietnam has a recorded history of more than two thousand years. The history of the Vietnamese people is characterized by a remarkable energy and a strong sense of national identity which enable them to survive as a nation despite long periods of foreign domination.

Prehistoric Period (until 111 B.C.)

According to legends, the first Vietnamese kingdom was established in the Red River Delta. The first dynasty, Hông Bàng, reigned from 2879 to 258 B.C. The Kingdom was called Văn-Lang. The first historical records pertaining to Vietnam were written by the Chinese in the third century. Earlier Chinese accounts mention a kingdom of the Viet south of the Yang Tse River around 500 B.C. In 258 the Kingdom of Văn-Lang collapsed and was replaced by the Kingdom of Âu-Lạc founded by Thục An Dương Vương. In 207 B.C., this Kingdom succumbed to the Chinese general Triệu-Đà who established the Kingdom of Nam-Việt and founded the Triệu Dynasty (207-111 B.C.). Although a Chinese dynasty, the Triệu were independent of the central authority in China.

Chinese domination (111 B.C. - 938 A.D)

In 111 B.C. China sent troops to conquer the Kingdom of Nam-Việt and established direct rule over the country which was renamed Giao-Chỉ and turned it into a province of the Chinese empire. The Chinese domination lasted for more than one thousand years, interspersed with short periods of successful uprising and independence: the revolt of the Trưng Sisters in 39-43 and the establishment of the Kingdom of Vạn-Xuân by the Lý

in 543-603. Despite ruthless control of the Chinese and the overwhelming influence of Chinese culture, the Vietnamese people still kept their national identity and never ceased to strive for national independence throughout the long period of Chinese domination.

Era of Independence (938-1883)

In 938, Ngô Quyền defeated the Chinese forces at Bạch-Đằng River and liberated the country from Chinese domination, thus starting a new era of national independence and prosperity. During the period of independence, which lasted for more than nine hundred years, Vietnam was successively ruled by the following dynasties: Ngô (938-944), Đinh (968-980), Anterior Lê (980-1000), Lý (1010-1214), Trần (1225-1400), Hồ (1400-1407), Posterior Lê (1428-1788), Tây-Sơn (1786-1802), and Nguyễn (1802-1945). There was a short period of Chinese domination of 20 years between 1407-1427.

The period of independence was characterized by the efforts of the Vietnamese people to repeal the Chinese invasion from the North, to expand their territory towards the South at the expense of the Chams and Cambodians, and to develop a culture of their own. The Vietnamese successfully rolled back Chinese invasion on several occasions: in 1076 under the Lý dynasty, three times under the Trần dynasty in 1257, 1284-85, and 1287-88 when general Trần Hưng Đạo tore the Mongolian troops to shreds on Bạch-Đằng River, in 1418-28 with Lê Lợi, who defeated the Ming armies of occupation in Vietnam and in 1788 with King Quang-Trung. The "march towards the South" seriously began under the Lý dynasty when King Lý ThánhTông annexed the two provinces of Quảng Bình and Quảng Trị of the Chams in 1069. In 1306, two more provinces of the Chams were added to Vietnam through the marriage of Princess Huyền Trân to King Chế-Mân. Under the Lê dynasty more territory was annexed from the Chams. The last Cham territory was annexed in the 16th century. The southward expansion was completed in 1780 when Vietnam reached the southern-most tip of the Indochinese peninsula. It was under the Nguyễn dynasty that Vietnam attained its present boundaries.

French domination (1858-1954)

The era of independence came to end in the latter part of the nineteenth century when Vietnam was conquered by the French. The conquest started with the capture of Đànẵng in

1858 and was completed in 1883 when Hànội fell to the French and King Tự-Đức was forced to sign the Treaty of August 25, 1883 in which Vietnam became a French protectorate. Vietnam then lost its political identity and unity. The French divided the country into three separate regions—Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina—each with a different form of administration, and merged them into the Union of French Indochina which also included Cambodia and Laos.

During the French domination, which lasted until 1954, the Vietnamese people had never ceased to fight for freedom and national independence. When the Second World War broke out, Japanese troops occupied Indochina with the consent of the French. In March 1945, the Japanese disarmed the French and put an end to the French domination in Indochina. When the Japanese surrendered to the Allies in August 1945, the Vietnamese people proclaimed Vietnam's independence and established a republican form of government on the abdication of Bảo-Đại, the last King of the Nguyễn dynasty. But the French soon tried to reconquer Indochina with help of the British and Chinese troops which were entrusted with disarming the defeated Japanese troops. However, the French could not reoccupy the whole country as they would. They met with a fierce resistance from Vietnamese people. But the resistance movement was soon monopolized by the communists who succeeded in liquidating all the nationalist leaders and those who were against their plan to turn Vietnam into a Communist country. In 1954, the Geneva Agreement officially put an end to the French rule in Indochina. This agreement also divided Vietnam into two separate states along the 17th parallel with North Vietnam under communist control and South Vietnam under a non-communist regime. But Communist North Vietnam soon attempted to conquer the South. A civil war began, with China and the Soviet Union providing aid to North Vietnam and the United States providing aid to South Vietnam. A fierce and merciless guerrilla war went on for almost twenty years, causing death and destruction to both North and South. The Paris Agreement in 1973 brought about the end of U.S. involvement in South Vietnam. Two years later, Communist North Vietnam launched an offensive and conquered the South on April 30, 1975. Vietnam was then reunited under the communist regime. Hundreds of thousands of people fled for fear of persecution by the new regime and sought asylum in the free world, especially in the United States, France, Canada, and Australia. That was the first time in the history of Vietnam that an exodus of such magnitude took place.

Appendix 1

A SYNOPSIS OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY

DATE	NAME OF DYNASTY	NAME OF KINGDOM
BC 2879-111	*PREHISTORIC PERIOD*	
2879-258	Hồng Bàng	Văn-Lang
258-207	Thục	Âu-Lạc
207-111	Triệu	Nam-Việt
BC 111-938 AD	*CHINESE DOMINATION*	Giao-Chỉ (Chinese province)
BC 111-39 AD	First Period	
39-43	The Trưng Sisters	
44-543	Second Period	
544-602	Anterior Lý	Vạn-Xuân
603-938	Third Period	
938-1858	*INDEPENDENCE ERA*	
938-944	Ngô	
944-968	Twelve Feudal Lords	
968-980	Đinh	Đại-Cồ-Việt
980-1000	Anterior Lê	
1010-1214	Posterior Lý	Đại-Cồ-Việt
1225-1400	Trần	An-Nam
1400-1407	Hồ	Đại-Ngu
1407-1427	Chinese Invasion	
1428-1786	Posterior Lê	Đại-Việt
	1527: Mạc Lords	
	1592: Trịnh Lords	
	Rivalry between Trịnh and Nguyễn Lords	
1786-1802	Tây Sơn	
1802-1945	Nguyễn	Việt-Nam
1858-1954	*FRENCH DOMINATION*	
1945-54	French War	
1954	Geneva Agreement and partition of North and South Vietnam and U S intervention	
1975	*COMMUNIST VICTORY*	

VIETNAMESE HISTORY IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE

	Vietnam	China	World
3000 BC	2879-111BC *Prehistoric Period* 2879-258 Legendary Hồng Bàng Dynasty	Legendary Emperor Huang Ti Hsia Dynasty Shang Dynasty (1700-1122) Chou Dynasty (1122-256) Lao Tse Confucius (551-479)	Pharonic rule in Egypt Phoenician alphabet invented Greeks destroyed Troy (1193) Legendary founding of Rome (752)
500 BC	258-111 Thục Dynasty Triệu Dynasty 111-938 Chinese Domination	Chin Dynasty Great Wall built (215 BC) Western Han (206-9 AD)	Alexander the Great Julius Caesar (100-44) Roman Empire Cleopatra (51 BC) Jesus Christ
AD 1	Trưng Sisters (39-43) Revolt of Lady Triệu	Hsin Dynasty (9-23) Eastern Han (23-220) Three Kingdoms (220-265) Six Dynasties (317-589)	

continued

500	Vạn Xuân Kingdom (544-602) Independence (938-1858) Ngô Đinh Lê (Anterior)	Sui Dynasty (590-618) Tang Dynasty (618-907) Five Dynasties (907-960) Sung Dynasty (960-1279)	King Arthur killed (537) Mohammed (570-632) Charlemagne (742-814) Alfred the Great (871)
1000	Lý Trần (Mongolian invasion repealed) Hồ Chinese Invasion Lê (Posterior)	Yuan Dynasty (Mongolian) (1279-1368) Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)	Norman Conquest (1066) The Crusades (1095-1291) Magna Carta (1215) Joan of Arc burned (1431) Columbus discovered America (1492)
1500	Tây Sơn (1773) Chinese invasion defeated by Quang Trung (1786)	Ching Dynasty (Manchu) (1644-1912)	Queen Elizabeth I Shakespeare Jamestown established Louis XIV built Versailles (1661) US Declaraton of Independence (1776) US Constitution (1787) French Revolution (1789)
1800	Nguyễn Dynasty (1802-1945) French Domination (1858-1954)	Opium War (1839-42)	Napoleon I (1804) US Civil War (1861-65)

continued

1900		Nationalist Revolution (1911)	World War I (1914-18) Hilter to power (1933)
	French war (1945-54)	Communist took power in China (1949)	World War II (1939-45)
	Geneva Agreement (1954) South Vietnam (1954-75) American Intervention		
1975	Communists took over whole Vietnam		

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OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE FRENCH DOMINATION OF VIETNAM

1857: French troops attacked Đà-Nẵng (Central Vietnam).

1858: Đà-Nẵng captured.

1861: Saigon captured.

1862: The Vietnamese Court in Huế:
a) ceded Saigon and adjacent areas to France.
b) agreed to pay a war indemnity.

1867: The Western part of South Vietnam taken by the French who ruled over the whole southern part of Vietnam.

1883: North Vietnam captured by the French. The August 25, 1883 Treaty signed. Vietnam's independance ended.

1887: Foundation of French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos).

1885: Uprising against the French by Emperor Hàm-Nghi who was sent in exile in 1888.

1893: Uprising led by Phan-Đình Phùng and Đề Thám.

1806: Nationalist movements led by Cường-Để, Phan Bội Châu and Phan Châu Trinh.

1916: Revolt by Emperor Duy Tân who was sent in exile by the French.

1930: Revolt by Nguyễn Thái Học, the Nationalist Party's Leader, in Yên Bái.

1940: Revolt at Gia-Định, Hóc Môn, South Vietnam.

1941: Uprising in Nghệ-An.

1945: (March) French troops disarmed by the Japanese army of occupation in Indochina.

(August) Declaration of Independence and establishment of a republican form of government in Vietnam. Abdication of Emperor Bảo-Đại.

(September) Attempts by the French to reconquer Vietnam.

1945-1954 Resistance movement against the French.

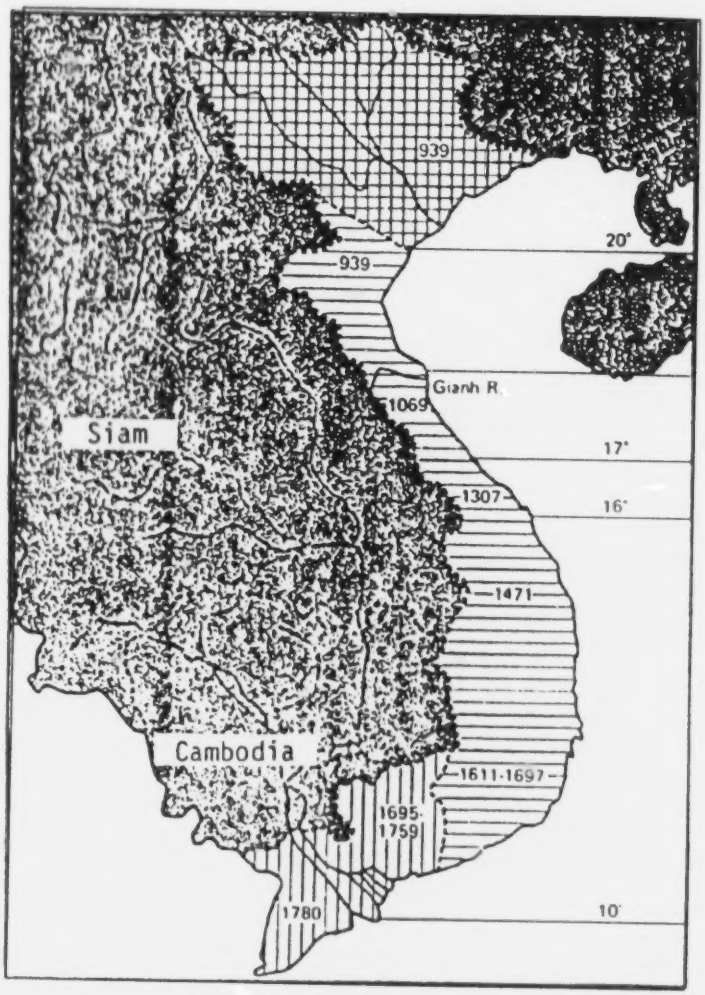
1954 French defeat at Điện Biên Phủ. The Geneva Agreement put an end to French colonialism in Indochina.

NAM VIET AS OF 211 B.C.

•Phiên Ngu (near Canton), capital of Nam Việt

•Cổ Lao (near Hanoi), capital of the Vietnamese state of Âu Lạc, which preceded Nam Việt

Source: Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Viet Nam, Histoire et civilization* (Paris, 1955), map 2



THE FORMATION OF VIETNAM: 939-1780

(Dates show the time each area was incorporated into the Vietnamese state.)

Main divisions of Vietnam in the nineteenth century, with Vietnamese, French, and English names

Bắc Bộ
Tonkin
North Vietnam

Trung Bộ
Annam
Central Vietnam

Nam Bộ
French Cochinchina
South Vietnam

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Chapter II

MAN IN RELATION TO HIMSELF

STATUS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Despite his concern for a certain amount of individuality, the Vietnamese is not an individualist. As we will see in the next chapter, in Vietnamese culture the individual's interests and destiny are rarely conceived outside the framework of his immediate and extended families. Anything a Vietnamese does, he usually does out of family consideration rather than for himself.

As an individual, the Vietnamese usually endeavors to live in harmony with himself as well as with the outer world of man and nature. Harmony with oneself is achieved by the acceptance of life and the world. To the Vietnamese, life is the most precious property to which no material possession can be compared. As a proverb puts it, *a man alive is worth more than a pile of gold*. The preservation of the self is not only a personal responsibility of the individual to himself but also an individual's responsibility toward his family. This recognition of the importance of the physical self distinguishes the mentality of the Vietnamese from the Hindu which is *characterized chiefly by the importance generally given to the world of the spirit, often carried to the extreme of despising, reproving, nay, considering as non-existent any material aspect of life.* (Jean Canu, 1952).

Harmony with oneself is achieved by observing moderation and by avoiding extremes. The reason behind the attitude of moderation in food and drink is not only the body's safety but also the moral desire to keep one's dignity unimpaired. Moderation and caution in speech constitute a distinctive feature of Vietnamese culture. Since childhood, the Vietnamese is taught to think deeply before opening his mouth, and, in the words of a well-known proverb, *to open his mouth only when asked to and to answer only when beckoned to.* This attitude is partly prompted by the belief that wise and talented people are modest in action and speech. Bragging reflects an empty soul. Moderation and caution in speech are also motivated by the awareness of the danger of verbal excess which can bring about discord and animosity. It is commonly believed that hasty words and slips of tongue are as devastating as hasty actions and bad deeds. Because of this cultural bias, the Vietnamese often appear to be

reserved, non- responsive and non-assertive by American standards. This is particularly true with the behavior of Vietnamese children in the school in which they rarely volunteer an answer for fear of being mistaken as trying to "show off". They would rather wait until called upon by the teacher to give an answer, for since early childhood, they have been taught "to talk only when talked to and to answer only when asked to". This attitude is also motivated by the fear of "losing face", should the answer be a wrong one. (The concept of face will be discussed in Chapter IV).

Certain virtues seem to have a greater appeal to the Vietnamese than the others. Most conspicuous are moderation, modesty, moral probity and self-control, qualities which make him a "refined, well-mannered" person. The term of criticism that the Vietnamese fears most is "ill-bred" (*đồ mất dạy*) which deals a mortal blow not only to his ego but also his sense of filial piety and the honor of his family.

NAMING SYSTEM

Besides the physical self, perhaps the single thing that confers identity and individuality to a person is his name. (In his own country, the Vietnamese does not have a social security number). The naming system of the Vietnamese is different from that of Americans and most of other Asian peoples.

A Vietnamese name usually consists of three components – family name, middle name, and given name– which *always* occur in that order. For a number of people, the name consists of family and given names only. Because of the order of occurrence of the family name (always first) and the given name (always last) in the Vietnamese sequence of names, such terms as "first name" and "last name" commonly used by Americans are very confusing for Vietnamese people who are not familiar with American culture. The use of such terms as "family name" and "personal name" would help avoid this confusion.

Unlike Americans, a Vietnamese is *always* called by his/her given name and referred to by his full name, and never by his family name alone. The given name or the middle name is never abbreviated. Thus a man whose name is *Nguyễn Văn Tâm* (always written in this order) will be called *Tâm* by his friends and members of his family and *Mr. Tâm* by all other people. A Vietnamese given name preceded by a title is practically an equivalent to the American last name and, without a title, it is an equivalent to the American first name.

After marriage, a Vietnamese woman still keeps her maiden

name as her legal name and does not change to her husband's last name. In informal circumstances, she will be referred to by her given name or her husband's, but in formal circumstances, she will be referred to by her maiden name in full, preceded by the title *Mrs*. Vietnamese names, especially names of those who are above us in social status, age, or rank in the family hierarchy, have a certain "taboo" quality. When talking to somebody who is not a close friend or a person who is senior to him in age or status, the Vietnamese tends to avoid mentioning that person's name. To do so would be impolite and insolent.

Appendix 2

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
A STUDY IN CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

What's your (last) name? This simple question, so easy for most foreigners who speak some English is, for the Vietnamese—even those who speak English fluently—a question to which a right answer is hard to give. The difficulty does not lie in the meaning of the term *name* but in the use of names which is different in American and Vietnamese societies. American people who are familiar with Vietnamese habits and customs epitomize the difference in the following statement: *They put their names in the wrong order, the last name is written first and the first, last.* This, however, is not the whole story. The best way to bring out the difference is, perhaps, to describe how names are used in Vietnamese society.

A Vietnamese name, e.g. *Nguyễn Văn Hai*, usually consists of three parts occurring in the following order: family name (*Nguyễn*), middle name (*Văn*), and given name (*Hai*). Some people do not have, or simply omit, middle names.

Generally speaking, a Vietnamese *family name* does not have any meaning or, at least, its meaning is no longer apparent to the common people. Unlike Americans, Vietnamese are never known by their family names (the first element of their names). A Vietnamese is always called by his given name. His family name appears only in a full name but never in isolation. There are a few exceptions to this general practice, however, and these are motivated by political reasons. Hồ Chí Minh was known as President Hồ (or Uncle Hồ) and Ngô Đình Diệm was called President Ngô because their followers wanted to sort them out from the rest of the nation and elevate them to the status of a divine ruler. Calling them by their given names would be a mark of irreverence amounting to sacrilege. (In the old days, only the King was not referred to by his given name but by his dynasty name. Referring to the King by his given name was a sacrilegious act punishable by imprisonment or even death.)

There are about one hundred family names for the whole population estimated at about 56 million, but only a score of these such as *Nguyễn, Lê, Trần, Phạm, Phan, Trương*, etc... are of frequent occurrence. This may partly explain why Vietnamese people are not called by their family names. There are too many people having the same (family) name. Some family names are indicative of the ethnic origin of the bearers (Chinese, Cham, Cambodian, Mường, others may have two different spellings and pronunciations such as *Võ: Vũ, Hoàng: Hùynh*, resulting from the practice of euphemism.

Given names usually have a meaning and parents often choose for their children names which reflect their aspirations and ideals. There can be as many given names as there are words in the Vietnamese language. Some of the common names are words denoting qualities and virtues (*Trung*: fidelity; *Hùng*: courage; *Liêm*: integrity); the seasons (*Xuân*: Spring; *Thu*: Autumn); flowers (*Hồng*: rose; *Lan*: orchid); fruits (*Nho*: grape; *Lê*: pear); natural phenomena and celestial bodies (*Tuyết*: snow; *Vân*: cloud; *Nguyệt*: the moon). Girls' names are frequently chosen from words denoting virtues, things that are beautiful, sweet, fragrant or melodious but these are not exclusively feminine names. Any name can be used for boys or girls although some names are used more often for girls than boys. In general, a given name consists of one word but it's becoming more and more frequent to give girls a two word name (or compound name like *Thu-Hồng, Bích-Hồng, Câm-Hồng, Thúy-Hồng*, instead of the single word *Hồng*. Boys may sometimes take a two-word name but this tends to be less common. As mentioned earlier, a man whose name is Nguyễn Văn Hai will be called *Mr. Hai* (given name) and never *Mr. Nguyễn*.

After marriage, a Vietnamese woman still keeps her own name and never combines her name with her husband's. Thus, a woman whose name is *Nguyễn Thị Thu-Hồng* married to a man whose name is *Trần Văn Tâm* will be (officially and legally) called *Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Thu-Hồng* and not *Trần Thị Thu-Hồng* or *Tâm Thị Thu-Hồng*. She may be called *Mrs. Trần Văn Tâm* but most often her papers still bear the name *Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Thu-Hồng*.

The Vietnamese given name, when preceded by a term of address like Mr., Mrs., Dr., Rev., etc... is practically an equivalent to the American last name. The given name used by itself is somewhat similar to the American first name. However, in Vietnamese society (given) names, especially names of those who are above us in social status, age or rank in the extended family, have a certain "taboo" quality. When talking to somebody who is not a close friend, Vietnamese people tend to avoid mentioning his name. This practice is also transferred to their intercourse with American people. Even when they speak English, they tend to avoid mentioning the (last) name of their interlocutor, especially when the interlocutor is their teacher or their boss. In Vietnamese society the greatest insult you can give to someone is to mention his father's or mother's given names. Because of this "taboo" quality names are carefully chosen when they are given to newborn babies so as to avoid names of one's parents, ancestors, relatives and close friends.

Vietnamese *middle names* are used for various purposes. They are used to differentiate a man's name from a woman's since there are practically no given names which are exclusively masculine or feminine. The common middle name for women is *Thị* or, less commonly, *Nữ*. So, *Nguyễn Văn Hai* is a man and *Nguyễn Thị Hai* is a woman. There is,

however, a tendency among the younger generation to drop the *Thị* from their names, thus eliminating the indication of their sex. Middle names for men are more varied. Some of the common are: *Văn, Đình, Hữu, Đức, Trọng*, etc. Middle names often represent a branch as distinguished from other branches of a larger family. In this case, the same middle name is shared by the members of different generations who belong to the same branch. For some people, the same middle name is used by members of the same generation to distinguish them from members of other generations. Sometimes a middle name is used to reinforce, qualify, or make the given name more meaningful. Take, for instance, *Nguyên Danh*, whose given name means (good) "reputation". With the middle name *Lưu*, his name will mean "leaving a good reputation" (*Nguyễn Lưu Danh*). A recent trend, no doubt influenced by foreign practices, is to use the mother's family name as a middle name. This, however, is not very common.

Because names are used differently in American and Vietnamese societies, the Vietnamese will face a dilemma in answering the simple question, *What's your (last) name*? Should a Vietnamese whose name is *Nguyễn Văn Hai* tell his American friends that his last (family) name is *Hai* or *Nguyễn*? If he says that his family name is *Hai*, he is not telling the truth because *Hai* is his given name. He is "right", however, in the sense that people will call him *Mr. Hai* as he has always been called by his fellow countrymen. But how can he explain that his father's family name is not *Hai* and his children's family name is not *Hai*, either? If he says that his family name is *Nguyễn* he is telling the truth, but he is not "right" because people will call him *Mr. Nguyễn* and not *Mr. Hai*, which is not the way he has been accustomed to. Moreover, his name will be rewritten *Hai Văn Nguyễn* which is as strange to him as the name of somebody unknown to him. The advantage in this case is that he will have the same name as his father's and his children's. In American names it is usually easy to distinguish the first from the last. John Smith and Smith John can only be the one and same person. This is not the case with Vietnamese names. *Hà Văn Mai* and *Mai Văn Hà* are two different persons. By *reversing* the order of the different parts of a Vietnamese name, we may change a person's name into another's completely unknown to him.

Vietnamese is a tone language and tones are represented in writing by various diacritic marks which are not used in English. In files written in English, different names like (*Nguyễn Văn*) *Tuyên, Tuyển, Tuyền, Tuyển*, etc... are usually written in the same way without any diacritic marks (*Tuyên*) and, therefore, it is not possible to tell who is who. Confusion of identity and embarrassment may arise in this case. But Vietnamese are making efforts to learn new things and new ways of doing things in their new adoptive country, including the practice of reversing the order of components of their names, recognizing a friend's

name written without diacritic marks and getting accustomed to being called by the family name.

A study of Vietnamese names would not be complete if we did not mention the way in which names are given to members of the former royal family. (The last King, Bảo Đại, abdicated in 1945 at the August Revolution to become citizen Nguyễn Vĩnh Thụy.) The name of the royal family is *Nguyễn*. The founder of the dynasty is Nguyễn Phúc Ánh known as King Gia-Long. His successor, Minh-Mang, devised a way to give names to members of the royal family to distinguish them from the common people. Those who are not direct descendants of the King will be known as *Tôn-Thất* (for men) and *Tôn-Nữ* (for women), those who are will be given a name, taken from a poem[1] written by Minh-Mang himself, to reflect the generation to which they belong. The first word in this poem, which consists of four lines with five words each, will be the (middle) name of the first generation of Minh-Mang's descendants, the second will be the name of the second generation and so on. Minh-Mạng envisioned that the Nguyễn family would reign for at least twenty generations. Unfortunately, it could last only for five generations after Minh-Mạng. The name of King Bảo-Đại is (*Nguyễn Phúc*) *Vĩnh Thụy*. *Vĩnh* is the fifth word in the poem written by Minh-Mạng. The names taken from Minh-Mạng's poem are actually middle names but members of the royal family use them as if they were family names. They simply leave out the family name *Nguyễn*. For women, members of each generation also receive a special name to distinguish them from other generations such as *Công Tôn Nữ*, *Công Huyền Tôn Nữ*, *Công Tằng Tôn Nữ*, etc... This practice still goes on even though there is no longer a king in Vietnam.

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1 Following is the above-mentioned poem by King Minh Mạng:

MIÊN HƯỜNG ƯNG BỬU VĨNH,
BẢO QUÍ ĐỊNH LONG TƯỜNG,
HIỀN NĂNG KHẢM KẾ THUẬT,
THỂ THOẠI QUỐC GIA XƯƠNG.

In Vietnam today, we could find some Vietnamese bearing *Định* as their middle name which represents the 8th generation from King Minh Mạng.

Chapter III

MAN IN RELATION TO OTHERS: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

FAMILY STRUCTURE

The family is the basic institution developed by the Vietnamese to perpetuate society and provide protection to the individual. Generally speaking, the Vietnamese family structure is more complex than that of the American family which is essentially nuclear in nature and which excludes relatives and in-laws. In the Vietnamese family structure roles are more numerous and more clearly defined than in its American counterpart.

Vietnamese people distinguish between the immediate family (*tiểu gia-đình*) and the extended family (*đại gia-đình*). The Vietnamese immediate family includes not only husband, wife and their unmarried children but also, most of the times, the husband's parents and the sons' wives and children. The extended family consists of the immediate family and close relatives sharing the same family name and ancestors who usually live in the same community.

The complexity of the Vietnamese concept of family is reflected in the rather complex terminology designating kinship. Each member of the extended family has a particular designation according to his relative position and his role in the family structure (Robert Spencer, 1945). In Vietnamese society, the father is the head of the family. However, unlike the father in traditional Chinese society, who is empowered, at least theoretically, with absolute rights over his children and wife (Chang-tu Hu, 1960 and A.F. Légendre, 1926), the Vietnamese father shares with his wife and children collective and bilateral responsibility, legally, morally, and spiritually. In the relationship between parents and children, as well as between husband and wife, the Vietnamese people retain much of their own custom and tradition, in spite of the great influence of Chinese culture and Confucian doctrine. In the eyes of her children the Vietnamese mother has the same status as the father. She is also the embodiment of love and the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice.

PARENT– CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Vietnamese parents consider it a most important respon-

sibility to train their children. By virtue of the principle of collective responsibility, the parents will bear the disgrace brought about by the activities of children who dishonor themselves in much the same way as they share the honor and fame of their virtuous and talented children.

At an early age, children are taught by their parents to behave according to the principle of filial piety and social courtesy. The family is the school where the child learns the respect rules both in behavior and in linguistic response. The cornerstone of children's behavior in the family is filial piety which consists in loving, respecting and obeying one's parents. Talking back or acting contrary to the wishes of one's parents is evidence of lack of filial piety. For the Vietnamese, the obligation to obey his parents does not end with his coming of age or his marriage. Filial piety also means solicitude and support to one's parents, chiefly in their old age. Vietnamese elderly people never live by themselves or in nursing homes but with one of their children, usually their eldest son.

This obligation is not discontinued by the parents' death. It survives in the form of ancestral cult and the maintenance of ancestral tombs. Ancestor worship is a family cult practised in most, if not all, Vietnamese homes, even in the homes of Vietnamese people living overseas. The child who lacks filial piety is rejected and ostracized by other members of the family and community. The worst insult which a Vietnamese can receive and by which he is mortally hurt is the expression "lack of filial piety" (*đồ bất hiếu*) applied to him.

SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

In Vietnamese culture, the relationship between siblings is determined by the principle of age priority which requires siblings to respect and obey older ones. The eldest brother is entrusted with a heavy responsibility, that of substituting for the parents in case of emergency. He is considered by his siblings as their leader. The principle of collective and bilateral responsibility underlies the relationship between members of the family at every level. Concord and love among siblings is a token of a happy and virtuous family.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELATIVES

As with members of the immediate family, members of the extended family are bound together by a strong sense of collective responsibility and mutual obligation. The notion of blood

relationship is always present in the mind of the Vietnamese. In honor or in disgrace, members of the extended family will share the same fate as if they were members of the immediate family. They are expected to give one another moral and material assistance, especially in time of stress. On the social and political planes, this strong sense of loyalty to the extended family tends to encourage the spirit of sectarianism and nepotism.

The notion of family ties is imprinted in the mind of the Vietnamese thanks to strict rules of precedence. Respect and love are demanded of young people to members of parental generation and above. Uncles and aunts must be treated with respect as if they were one's own parents. Filial piety is the compulsory rule in relations from descendants to ascendants. Besides the consciousness of blood relationship and linguistic ties which express themselves in a very detailed kinship terminology, members of the Vietnamese extended family are closely bound by the common veneration of the dead. Ancestor worship is a hyphen between the dead and the living and a strong tie between members sharing the same ancestry. Through such rites as the cleaning of the ancestral tombs (*lễ tảo mộ*) and celebration of ancestral death anniversaries (*ngày giỗ*) [2] which all members of the extended family are expected to attend, the ties which bind the Vietnamese to other members of his family are reinforced.

CONCLUSION

In the last three decades the Vietnamese family institution has been attacked on all fronts. The Western doctrine of individualism advocated the liberation of the individual from the encroachment of the family upon his personal freedom. Under the communist regime of North Vietnam, children were taught to spy on their own parents and report to the Party of any subversive talk or behavior. The war devastated the country side and brought people to the cities where narrow spaces are not suitable to the pattern of the extended family. Since 1975, with the communist takeover of the whole country and the tragic exodus of the Vietnamese people throughout the world to search for freedom, the Vietnamese family has become increasingly broken and dispersed. Husbands and wives, fathers and sons, mothers

2 Vietnamese people do not generally celebrate their own birthdays or their parents' but do not fail to celebrate their parents', their ancestors', and their relatives' death anniversaries. For a discussion of ancestor worship in Vietnamese society, see Cadière (1958).

and daughters live thousands and thousands of miles apart. But despite of all this, deep family feelings and ties are still strong and the Vietnamese family concept still survives through time and change.

Chapter IV

MAN IN RELATION TO OTHERS: WIDER SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

RESPECT BEHAVIOR IN NON-FAMILY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

The desire to achieve harmony between the self and the non-self still remains the essential preoccupation of the Vietnamese in interpersonal relations outside the family group. The basic principle underlying family relationship such as respect due to elders is extended to the relationship between members of wider social groups. The concept of society as an extension of the family is evidenced by the transposition into social usage of a language originally intended for domestic life. Vietnamese uses more than a score of kinship terms as personal pronouns. The choice of the appropriate word depends on the relative age, social status, and sex of the persons involved as well as the degree of acquaintance, respect, and affection between speakers and hearers who are not related to each other by blood or marriage (see Appendix 3).

In Vietnamese society, the predominant sentiment in the relation between members of a social group is respect. This is particularly true of attitude towards old people. Respect and consideration for old age no doubt derive from the obligation of filial piety which requires young people to respect and love their parents and older members of the family. They are also due to belief that a long life is a sign of kindness and regard on the part of God for virtuous people and that old people are the carriers of tradition and the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. Old people enjoy high respect in Vietnamese society, irrespective of wealth, position, and status. This respect is expressed both in attitude, behavior, and in the use of special terms of address and stylistic devices. Unlike Western societies which put a premium on youth, Vietnamese society is proud of its old members. Age constitutes an asset, not a liability.

Like old people, teachers—even though they are young—enjoy great respect and prestige in Vietnamese society. In Vietnam the student-teacher relationship retains much of the quality of a son's respect for his father's wisdom and of a father's concern for his son's welfare. The respect which students show to their teachers is also evidenced by linguistic data. The terms

of address which students use in speaking to their teachers are those they use in speaking to their parents. Not only the students but the students' parents too, show special courtesy and respect to the teacher.

On the positive side, respect is often expressed in the form of courtesy, on the negative side, it consists in trying to spare others from the humiliation of losing face. Linguistic devices are one of the many ways which help the Vietnamese achieve this objective. Depreciatory terms are applied to oneself and complimentary terms used for others. Face is extremely important for the Vietnamese. Everybody is eager to save his face, the rich like the poor, those in high as well as in low social positions. This fear of losing face is explicable in an immobile society (horizontal immobility only). The individual who loses face will have to endure public ridicule and derision right in the midst of his community. Furthermore, the family would have to share any social disgrace incurred by the individual. So, one is very careful to avoid losing face and refrain from making others to lose face. The practice of beating about the bush to avoid a negative answer to a request and the tendency of the Vietnamese student to say *yes* to every question asked by his teacher stems from this preoccupation of "saving face".

Appendix 3

"YOU" AND "I" IN VIETNAMESE

One of the most important features of Vietnamese culture is the expression of respect paid to other people in society. In America, people put emphasis on friendliness in interpersonal relationships while in Vietnamese society the emphasis is more on respect. We may say without fear of error that respect is the cornerstone of interpersonal relationships in Vietnamese society, whether in the family or in social circles, whether on the employment scene or between friends and lovers. This is reflected in the language used by the Vietnamese in their daily life.

In making an utterance, the Vietnamese express at the same time with ideas and concepts, an attitude of respect (or disrespect) towards the interlocutor. This expression is so natural—because inherent in the nature of the words used—that generally both the speaker and the hearer do not pay any attention to and are not conscious of it. But, if the speaker unintentionally (or purposely) uses a word reflecting an attitude of disrespect, the hearer will instantly realize it and react to it accordingly.

American people use only one word—the word *yes*—to express agreement and this word doesn't reflect any attitude of respect or disrespect. Of course, an answer with the mere word *yes* lacks the courtesy conveyed by a long answer such as *Yes, I am, Yes, he did,* or *Yes, Mr. Brown.* On the contrary, the Vietnamese speaker must choose between *Dạ, Vâng, Phải, Ừ...* to express agreement. No well-bred Vietnamese would use *Ừ* as an answer in talking to his parents, older people, his teacher, his superior, or monks and priests. In Vietnamese, other people invite us to *xơi* (eat) *rice* (take a meal) but in replying, we must say that we have already or not yet *ăn* (eat) and not *xơi.* How complicated it is!

In a letter addressed to a person they don't know to ask for information, to apply for a job, or for whatever purpose, American people usually use the term *Dear* preceding the name (the last name, it should be noted) of the recipient to show courtesy and friendliness (non-hostility). Vietnamese people, by contrast, use only terms expressing respect such as *Kính, Kính thưa...* and never call the person by name, for this would convey an impolite, disrespectful attitude. Consequently, *Dear Mr. Brown* is not *Ông Brown thân mến* but simply *Thưa Ông* or *Kính Ông.* Even the practice of calling the interlocutor by name or avoiding it reflects the psychological background of Vietnamese and American cultures (more emphasis on respect or on friendliness). In American society where almost nobody knows anybody else, even people living in the same apartment complex, mentioning the name (last name, that

is) of the interlocutor shows that one is interested in and friendly with him, the evidence of which is to be found in the remembering of his name. Consequently, so as to show that they are courteous and friendly, American people usually mention the name of the interlocutor in their greetings (i.e. *Good morning, Mr. Brown* or *Good-bye, Miss Green* when speaking to people who are not close friends, and *Good morning, Bill* or *Good-bye, Susie* when speaking to friends).

In Vietnamese society, almost everybody knows the name of everybody else living in the same community. The neighbors (usually called "relatives in the neighborhood") are often considered as friends or relatives. In greeting, we often avoid mentioning the name of the interlocutors, especially those who are senior in age or status. We call them by name only when they are our close friends or junior in age or status, otherwise calling them by name is a sign of insolence and lack of manners.

In Vietnamese, when we want to show special respect to the interlocutors (persons such as parents, old people, teachers, monks and priests, superiors) we always start the sentence with a function-word expressing respect such as *Dạ, Thưa, Dạ thưa, Kính thưa*. Therefore the word *Dạ* in this context is but a function-word showing respect and does not show agreement.

Perhaps personal pronouns are a word class in Vietnamese which best reflects this preoccupation for expressing respect or disrespect for other people in language. American people use the only word *you* to address parents, brothers and sisters, wife and children, friends and foes, and even animals. Likewise, they use the only word *I* to refer to themselves when speaking to the above mentioned people. (Of course there is also the word *me*, but *me* is but an inflected form of *I*) How convenient it is! But at the same time those words lack the ability to express feelings of respect or disrespect of the Vietnamese personal pronouns.

When addressing people who are senior in age or status, we usually use such terms of respect as *Cụ, Ông, Bác, Chú, Anh, Thầy, Cha, Bà, Cô*. When addressing people who are younger than ourselves or who have a lower status, we usually use such term as *Anh, Chị, Chú, Em, Cháu Con*. To show anger and despise, we use such discourteous terms as *Mày, Mi*... When fawning, we use such words as *Ngài, Cụ Lớn*.

By merely observing the use of the personal pronouns in Vietnamese, people can guess, to a certain extent, the personality and good manners of the speaker as well as the relationship between speaker and hearer with regard to feelings and respect. The use of these personal pronouns is a very delicate matter depending on the relative age, status, and degree of intimacy between speaker and hearer. Consequently, the use of personal pronouns is not invariable as in the case of English (always, *you, I*) but will change according to the intensity of respect (or

disrespect) and love (or hatred) that exist between hearer and speaker. A man and a woman, at their first acquaintance, will call each other *Ông* and *Tôi* (or *Cô* and *Tôi*). But as the degree of intimacy reaches the level of love, the term *Ong* is replaced by *Anh* and the term *Tôi* will become *Em*. When love is lost, they will revert to the initial *Ông, Tôi*. In some cases where anger, hatred, and lack of self-control prevail, *ông* may become *Mày* and *Tôi* may become *Tao*. The terms *Anh/Em* and *Mày/Tao* are separated by a Great Wall of feelings and emotions.

Terms of address such as *Bác, Chú, Anh*, are perhaps the most difficult to use in Vietnamese because they can express opposite feelings and sentiments. According to contexts, they may express respect or disdain, familiarity or contempt. Perhaps they are much more difficult to use than the French words *tu/toi* which can express either intimacy or contempt. When we address a stranger *tu/toi*, the only feeling conveyed is obviously contempt. But a Vietnamese addressing a stranger as *Bác* may mean respect (considering him on the same footing as our father's elder brother), familiarity and affection (regarding him as his uncle), or outright contempt (looking down on him as having a low social status).

The expression of respect (or contempt) is inherent in the structure of Vietnamese. In using Vietnamese, we cannot overlook this essential feature of Vietnamese culture which is the expression of respect in language.

Chapter V

MAN IN RELATION TO OTHERS: LANGUAGE AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

LANGUAGE

Vietnamese is the national language of more than 56 million speakers in Vietnam and more than one million Vietnamese immigrants living overseas. It is not mutually intelligible with any other national languages spoken in Asia. Like the ethnic origin of the Vietnamese people, the genetic relationship of the Vietnamese language is still a matter of controversy. Vietnamese has been successively assigned to the Sino-Tibetan, Tai, Mon-Khmer, Malayo-Polynesian and Austro-Asiatic language families.

Vietnamese is diversified into three main dialects (Northern, Central, and Southern) which differ from one another both phonologically and lexically. These differences do not, however, prevent Vietnamese people from understanding one another although they can help identify the locality which the speaker of a dialect comes from. The situation is more comparable to English which has British, American, and Australian varieties than to Chinese which consists of mutually unintelligible dialects.

From the phonological point of view, Vietnamese is a monosyllabic and tonal language. In spite of its monosyllabism, which is recognized by the articulatory manner of the syllables in connected speech, Vietnamese has a sizeable number of words which are disyllabic and sometimes, polysyllabic. Unlike intonation, tones are pitch changes within a word which affect its lexical meaning. Tones are not uniform in the three main dialects of Vietnamese. While the Northern dialect has six tones, the Central and the Southern dialects have five tones only.

In some dialects, the number of tones is reduced to four. The same tone may have markedly different phonetic characteristics in the three main dialects.

The six tones in Vietnamese are:

-The level tone (*thanh không dấu*) in such words as *ma* (ghost), *la* (shout).

-The breathy rising tone (*thanh sắc*) in such words as *má*

(cheek), *lá* (leaf).

-The breathy falling tone (*thanh huyền*) in such words as *mà* (but), *là* (to be).

-The falling-rising tone (*thanh hỏi*) in such words as *mả* (tomb), *lả* (exhausted).

-The creaky-rising tone (*thanh ngã*) in such words as *mã* (horse), *lã* (plain water).

-The low falling tone (*thanh nặng*) in such words as *mạ* (young rice plant), *lạ* (stranger).

Generally speaking, Vietnamese has thirty-five segmental phonemes which consist of vowels, semi-vowels, and consonants. The number and nature of these phonemes vary slightly from one dialect to another. The eleven *vowels* which exsist in almost all dialects of Vietnamese are:

- /i/ in *bi* (marbles)
- /e/ in *lê* (pear)
- /ɛ/ in *nghe* (hear)
- /a/ in *ba* (three)
- /u/ in *ngu* (stupid)
- /o/ in *khô* (dry)
- /ɔ/ in *to* (big)
- /ɯ/ in *thư* (letter)
- /ɤ/ in *mơ* (dream)
- /ɐ/ in *măng* (bamboo shoot)
- /ʌ/ in *dân* (people)

Consonants present less uniformity among the dialects than vowels. Certain consonants exist in one dialect as a separate phoneme but not in some others. They are twenty-six in number:

- /b/ with two allophones {b} in *ba* (three) and {p} in *thấp* (low)
- /t/ in *tối* (dark)
- /t'/ in *thôi* (cease)
- /d/ in *đôi* (a pair)
- /n/ in *nói* (speak)
- /ɲ/ in *nhà* (house)
- /ŋ/ in *ngà* (ivory)

- /ʈ/ in *tre* (bamboo) (in Central & Southern dialects only)
- /ŋ͡m/ in *lông* (hair)
- /c/ in *cha* (father)
- /f/ in *phai* (fade)
- /k/ in *ca* (sing)
- /v/ in *voi* (elephant) (in Northern and Central dialects only)
- /k͡p/ in *học* (study)
- /s/ in *xa* (far)
- /g/ in *gan* (liver) (Northern dialect only)
- /z/ in *dê* (goat)
- /m/ in *ma* (ghost)
- /ʃ/ in *sao* (star) (not in Northern dialect)
- /j/ in *già* (old) (in Central and Southern dialects only)
- /ʒ/ in *ruồi* (flies) (not in Northern dialect)
- /x/ in *khô* (dry)
- /l/ in *la* (shout)
- /h/ in *ho* (cough)
- /w/ in *hoa* (flower)
- /y/ in *dài* (long) (in Central and Southern dialects only)

All vowels, except for /ɐ/ and /ʌ/, can occur initially, medially, or finally. They can also occur in clusters to form diphthongs and triphthongs. Vietnamese is rich in diphthongs and triphthongs. There are twenty five diphthongs, both of the closing and widening types, and seven triphthongs. All Vietnamese consonants (except the allophone [p]) occur in the initial position but few consonants occur in the final position. There are only ten final consonants in Vietnamese. They are: /p, t, k, c, k͡p, m, n, ŋ, ɲ, ŋ͡m/. In contrast with English, Vietnamese consonants do not occur in clusters, whether initially or finally.[3]

From the morphological point of view, Vietnamese is an isolating language. Unlike English, Vietnamese does not express grammatical categories by way of suffixes. When necessary, grammatical meaning is expressed by function words.

3 We are talking about consonant *sounds* and not consonant letters. In Vietnamese writing there are clusters of consonants such as "ch", "ph", "ng", "ngh", "tr", "th", etc... but these clusters represent *single* sounds (/c/ f/ ŋ/ ʈ/ t'/.

Therefore Vietnamese words remain invariable, whether they are singular or plural, masculine or feminine.

Example:

Một con ngựa: one horse.
Năm con ngựa: five horses

Tense is a necessary grammatical category in English in which the verb form expresses the contrast between past and present tenses. In Vietnamese the same verb form is used for present, past, and future actions, or for first, second, and third person.

Nó ăn cơm (He eats rice/ he ate rice)
Tôi ăn cơm (I eat rice/ I ate rice)

The form of a word in Vietnamese does not assign it to a definite part of speech. A word can be a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb, according to the position it occupies in the sentence and/or the words accompanying it.

Vietnamese relies almost entirely on syntax for expressing grammatical relationships and meaning. The two syntactic devices mainly used in Vietnamese are word-order and function-words. Since Vietnamese words are invariable, there are no inflection, concord, or agreement. Word-order is very important in Vietnamese. Generally, a sentence will completely change its meaning or become meaningless if we change the order of the words in that sentence. Because words are invariable, they can occupy almost any position in the sentence, bringing about change of meaning of the sentence in each position. The concepts of tense, aspect, voice, number, negation, interrogation, imperative, and exclamation are all expressed by function words.

The Vietnamese affirmative statement has pretty much the same word-order as its equivalent in English, that is "actor-action-recipient of action" of the type *dogs bite men*: *chó cắn người*. But unlike English, inversion of subject never occurs in a Vietnamese negative or interrogative sentence.

Vietnamese lexicon consists of a stratum of native words and a large number of words borrowed from foreign languages. The two main lexical devices popularly used in the coining of words with native linguistic materials are compounding and reduplication. A distinguishing characteristic of Vietnamese vocabulary is the existence of words having a general meaning from which compound words are created to denote more specific

meaning. For example, from the general term *tủ* which denotes a container of any size, material, shape or use, the compound words *tủ sách* (bookcase), *tủ áo* (closet), *tủ trà* (cupboard), *tủ hàng* (shop-window), *tủ sắt* (safe) *tủ lạnh* (refrigerator) are coined. Another distinctive feature of Vietnamese vocabulary is the reduplication of morphemes, with or without phonological changes, to coin a new word expressing new denotation or connotation. *Xanh-xanh* (bluish), deriving from the morpheme *xanh* (blue) and *mờ-mịt* (vague, uncertain) deriving from the morpheme *mờ* (not clear) are examples of reduplication. Other devices of word creation such as shortening, blending, onomatopoeia and acronyms are not popular in Vietnamese.

Loan-words, loan-morphemes and loan translation are the main devices used in coining new words with materials borrowed from foreign languages. Almost all loan words in Vietnamese undergo phonological change and, to a certain extent, semantic change or restriction. Chinese and French are the two main sources of linguistic borrowing for Vietnamese. Following are a few examples of loan words, loan morphemes and loan translation:

xà-phòng (soap) directly borrowed from the French word *savon*

ôc-xy-hóa, a new creation from the French morpheme *oxygène* (oxygen) and the Chinese morpheme 化 (to become)

hộp-đêm (night club), a literal translation of the French word *boîte de nuit*.

WRITING

The writing system used by Vietnamese people nowadays is an alphabetic writing called *quốc-ngữ*. The Vietnamese alphabet was devised by European missionaries—French, Spanish and Portuguese in particular—in the 17th century for the purpose of translating the Bible into the vernacular. It became the national writing for the Vietnamese people in the second decade of this century. The Vietnamese writing system aims at representing the pronunciation of Vietnamese on the basis of "one grapheme per phoneme". The Vietnamese alphabet consists of twelve vowel letters, twenty-six consonants or groups of consonant letters and five tone marks (see Appendix 6).

The use of the alphabetic writing in Vietnam is of recent date. For centuries, both under the Chinese domination (111 B.C.-938 A.D.) and long after independence was reconquered from the Chinese, the Chinese writing system, called Chinese

characters, remained the main writing used by the Vietnamese. Chinese characters, being the graphic representation of the Chinese language, were used only by those who learned Chinese. Consequently, this type of writing was restricted to the class of scholars and "educated people".

The need for a writing system which could represent the Vietnamese language led to the creation of *chữ nôm* or the demotic writing system. *Chữ nôm* aims at representing Vietnamese speech but still uses symbols borrowed from Chinese characters. This writing system is still more complicated than Chinese characters themselves because it endeavors to represent both pronunciation and meaning by separate constituent elements. The earliest record of *chữ nôm* now available is dated 1282. It is in this type of writing that most literary creations by Vietnamese authors in the Vietnamese language prior to the nineteen twenties had been recorded and transmitted to the present generation.

Attempts to use the Roman alphabet to represent Vietnamese started as early as the 17th century. Alexandre de Rhodes wrote the first Vietnamese dictionary published in Rome in 1651. During the two centuries that followed, the Vietnamese alphabetic writing system was restricted to a small circle of Christian clergy while the majority of "educated people" used *chữ nôm* and Chinese characters as a medium of written communication. The first printing press for *quốc ngữ* was installed in Vietnam in 1865 and not until after the first World War did *quốc ngữ* become the national writing system for Vietnam. Nowadays it is the only writing system used by Vietnamese people. Very few can read and write the demotic writing or Chinese characters.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

As in most cultures, non-verbal communication plays an important role in Vietnamese society, sometimes to accompany and reinforce linguistic symbols, sometimes as substitute for language.

In a previous chapter, it was pointed out that respect is the cornerstone of interpersonal relationships in Vietnamese society. Respect is conveyed by the use of special terms of address and certain stylistic devices. But respect is also expressed by non-verbal behavior. A Vietnamese student who sits quietly and listens attentively to the teacher wants to express respect to his teacher. This behavior has often been misinterpreted by the American teacher as a passive and non-responsive attitude on the part of the student. It is also out of respect to the teacher that

the Vietnamese student avoids eye contact with the teacher when speaking or being spoken to. By American standards, a person acting in this way would appear suspicious, unreliable, or mischievous. In Vietnamese culture, however, looking into somebody's eyes, especially when this person is of a higher status (in age or in social or family hierarchy) or of a different sex, usually means a challenge or an expression of deep passion. The proper respect behavior is to avoid eye contact in talking to someone who is not an equal or of the same sex.

The smile, which is sometimes enigmatic to the American observer, is another non-verbal symbol conveying the feeling of respect in Vietnamese culture. It is used as an expression of apology for a minor offence– being tardy in class, for example– or an expression of embarrassment when one commits an innocent blunder. For the Vietnamese, the smile is a proper response in most situations in which verbal expression is not needed or not appropriate. It is used as a substitute for *I'm sorry*, *Thank you* or *Hi!* It is used instead of a ready *yes* to avoid appearing over-enthusiastic. The smile is also a proper response to scoldings or harsh words to show that one does not harbor any ill feelings toward the interlocutor or that one sincerely acknowledges the mistake or fault committed.

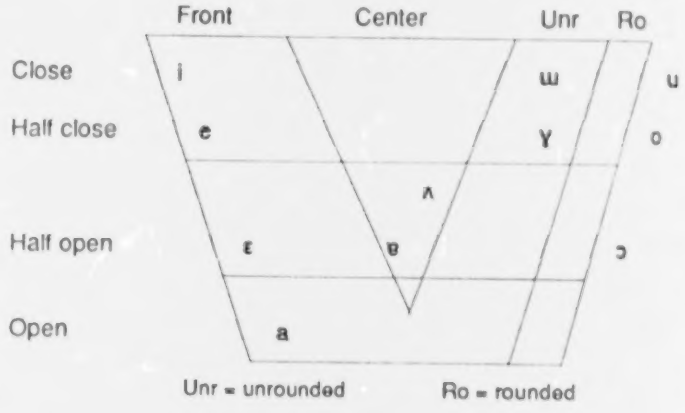
It should be noted that for certain feelings, Vietnamese culture prefers non-verbal communication while American culture is more inclined to use linguistic expression. For casual and informal circumstances, feelings of thankfulness or apology are not expressed by verbal expression such as *thank you* or *I'm sorry* but by non-verbal behavior (silence or a smile). Parents and teachers never say thanks to their children or students for a small service done, closing the window or passing the books around, for instance. A smile will do in this case. The person who gives a compliment never expects a *thank you* in return. In Vietnamese culture, a verbal expression of thanks in this case amounts to a lack of modesty from the person who receives the compliment. A smile or a blush in the face is the proper response to a compliment. If a verbal response is necessary, one would deny the compliment, saying that one does not deserve it. Because of the difference in the mediums used to express the feelings of appreciation or apology in the two cultures, misunderstandings have occurred.

Appendix 4

VIETNAMESE SEGMENTAL PHONEMES

(The Phonetic Symbols used in this book are IPA Symbols)

VOWELS



CONSONANTS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Stops Vls, unas	p		t		(ʈ)	c	k k͡p	
Vls, asp			t'					
Vcd	b		d				g	
Nasals	m		n			ɲ	ŋ ŋ͡m	
Spirants Vls		f		s	(ʃ)		x	h
Vcd		(v)		(z)	(ʒ)	j	{ɣ}	
Lateral				l				
Trill				{r}				
Semi-vowels	w					y		

Vls = voiceless Vcd = voiced
Unas = unaspirated asp = aspirated
( ) = sounds not having phoneme status
{ } = sounds not existing in all the main dialects

KEY —points of articulation
1 = bilabial 2 = labio-dental 3 = dental
4 = alveolar 5 = retroflex or palato-alveolar
6 = palatal 7 = velar 8 = glottal

Appendix 5

ENGLISH & VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE STRUCTURE DIFFERENCES

PHONOLOGY

ENGLISH	VIETNAMESE
Essentially a *polysyllabic* and *intonational* language	Essentially a *monosyllabic* and *tonal* language
Stress:	*Stress:*
- phonemic	- *not* phonemic
- may be used for contrastive purposes	-*not* used for contrastive purposes
Intonation:	*Intonation:*
- varied	- limited
- used to express different attitudes	- not used to express different attitudes
- may be used as a syntactic device	- not used as a syntactic device
Sounds:	*Sounds:*
Vowels:	*Vowels:*
- long and short vowels having phonemic contrasts	- *no* phonemic contrasts involving short and long vowels
- some vowels do not have equivalents in Vietnamese	- some vowels do not have equivalents in English
Consonants:	*Consonants:*
- all consonants except /h/ can occur in the final position	- only a very *limited* number of consonants can occur in the final position
- can occur in clusters	- cannot occur in clusters

- some consonants do not have equivalents in Vietnamese	- some consonants do not have equivalents in English
Diphthongs:	*Diphthongs:*
- limited in number & of the falling type	- more diphthongs and triphthongs than English, having both falling *and rising* diphthongs

GRAMMAR

Morphology	*Morphology*
- of the *inflected* language group	- of the *isolating language group*
- *inflections* used to express grammatical categories (number, tense, mood etc.)	- words are *invariable*, markers are used to express grammatical meanings.
Syntax	*Syntax*
- *Syntactic devices:*	- *Syntactic devices:*
word order - function words - inflection - intonation	word order & function words *only*
- *Word order:*	- *Word order:*
modifiers usually *preceding* head	modifiers usually *following* head
- *Negative sentence:*	- *Negative sentence:*
use of negative marker and also of auxiliaries	use of negative markers only
- *Interrogative sentence:*	- *Interrogative sentence:*
use of inversion of subject but also of auxiliaries & intonation as question markers	use of function words as question mark *only*, no inversion or auxiliaries used

LEXICON

Areas of meaning: Usually different from those covered by words considered equivalents in Vietnamese	*Areas of meaning*: Usually different from those covered by words considered equivalent in English
Tendency to use *different* (unrelated) *words* for specific objects	Tendency to use a *general term* for a whole class of objects and compound-words deriving from *general term* for specific objects
Two-word verbs having meaning different from meanings of constituents (idioms)	Meaning of *two-word verbs* is meaning of constituents

Appendix 6

VIETNAMESE WRITING

Alphabet

a	ă	â	b	c	ch	d	đ
e	ê	g	gi	gh	h	i	k
kh	l	m	n	nh	ng	ngh	o
ô	ơ	p	ph	qu	r	s	t
th	tr	u	ư	v	x	y	

Tones (marks over the "a")

ma (ghost)	?	mả (tomb)	
má (cheek)	~	mã (horse)	
mà (but)	.	mạ (young rice plant)	

A sample of writing

Chúng tôi tin rằng những điều sau đây là những sự thật hiển nhiên: mọi người sinh ra đều bình đẳng.Tạo hoá phú cho họ những quyền bất khả xâm phạm trong những quyền đó có quyền sống, quyền tự do và quyền mưu cầu hạnh phúc.

(We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.)

Chapter VI

MAN IN RELATION TO OTHERS: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Before the Geneva Agreement.

Prior to the French conquest which took place in the latter half of the 19th century, Vietnam was a unified state under a hereditary King. Its political system was based– as it has been for centuries– on the principle of absolute monarchy in which the King was vested with limitless authority. All the executive, legislative and judiciary powers were in his own hands. The King presided over an elaborate bureaucracy of scholars-- officials selected through competitive examinations. This system of recruiting public officials was instrumental in fostering vertical mobility in traditional Vietnamese society. Vietnamese history and literature are full of stories about farmhands and buffalo boys attaining outstanding public careers for which they become eligible after patient years of study. Unlike India, Vietnamese society had no discrete castes with hereditary privileges or disadvantages. The social system was a hierarchy of statuses based on relative age, learning, and public functions rather than a ranking of classes based on hereditary prerogatives, property, and income. There was the tradition of self-government on the level of the village which was the basic political unit of the nation. The village was governed by officials selected by its own people. It had its own customs and traditions. Local customs often showed themselves independent of national laws as evidenced by the proverb, *The King's laws yield before the customs of the village.*

When the French took control of Indochina, they retained much of the traditional system, superimposing upon it their own colonial administration. Vietnam was divided into three separate entities: the Southern part, re-named Cochinchina, was a colony directly governed by French administrators under French laws; the Northern part, called Tonkin, and the central part, called Annam, were protectorates. However, the limited authority of the Vietnamese royal government was confined to the central part of Vietnam only. In both protectorates the real power was in the hands of French administrators and bureaucracy. Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin, Laos, and Cambodia formed

the Union of French Indochina under a governor-general appointed by the Ministry of Colonies in Paris.

In March 1945, the Japanese army of occupation in Indochina disarmed the French and put an end to the French domination. Emperor Bảo Đại, with Japanese support, proclaimed Vietnam's independence and established a national government which did not have any real power. The real master of the country was still the Japanese. In August 1945, after the defeat of Japan by the Allies, Emperor Bảo Đại abdicated in favor of the Vietnam Independence Front (called Việt-Minh), a popular movement for independence in which the Communists— under the guise of nationalists— played a predominant role. On September 2, 1945, Vietnam was proclaimed an independent and democratic republic. A Government was set up with Hồ Chí Minh as president. Soon a constitution was adopted in 1946 proclaiming the principles of democracy and civil rights. But once they were in power, the communists in the Việt-minh Front began a systematic "liquidation" of all the nationalist leaders and those who opposed their plan to turn Vietnam into a Communist state. The regime was the most authoritarian that had ever existed in Vietnam. No divergence from the official policy of the Việt-Minh was tolerated, let alone political opposition.

With the help of the British and Chinese troops which had been entrusted by the Allies to disarm the defeated Japanese troops, the French returned to Indochina in September 1945 and attempted to re-establish their domination over their former colonies. But the French met with a fierce resistance from the Vietnamese people. The French succeeded in controlling a number of large cities and towns all over Vietnam but the Viet-Minh forces controlled large areas of the Mekong delta in the South, more than half of the rural countryside outside of Hanoi in the North, and the most of the Central highlands and scattered areas of the Central lowlands.

To counteract the Việt-Minh government, the French established the State of Vietnam in 1949 with Bảo Đại as Chief of State. The real power, nevertheless, was still entirely in the hands of the French. After nine years of indecisive war, the French finally signed the Geneva Agreement to end the hostilities and withdrew their expeditionary troops from Indochina.

Since the Geneva Agreement

The Geneva Agreement, signed on July 20, 1954, partitioned Vietnam along the 17th parallel and created two Vietnams: North Vietnam under the communist rule led by Hồ Chí

Minh and South Vietnam under a non-communist government led by Bảo-Đại as Chief of State.

On October 26,1955, Ngô Đình Diệm, who had been appointed by Bảo-Đại as Prime-Minister, declared South Vietnam to be a republic under his presidency. Bảo-Đại was thrown out of the political arena. A constitution was promulgated the following year. It provided for separation of executive and legislative powers but the relative strength of the two branches was markedly uneven. There was no separate autonomous judicial branch and the court system was under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice. The President was elected by direct ballot for a five-year term. The legislative, known as the National Assembly, was unicameral and composed of deputies elected by direct suffrage.

The constitution existed only on paper. The entire government system was controlled by the office of the Presidency, in particular by Ngô Đình Nhu who was Diệm's brother and advisor. The Ngô brothers ruled the country with iron hands, their powers extended directly to the provinces, districts, and even the villages. A presidential decree provided for the appointment of village councilors by the province chief, injecting government control into the traditionally self-governing village. The regime became more and more repressive and the whole government system became the personal concern of the Ngô family.

On November 1, 1963, the Diệm regime was overthrown by a military uprising in the course of which Diệm and his brother were killed. With the death of Diệm, the civilian system of government in South Vietnam also came to an.end. The country was ruled by a military junta which was torn by internal strife for power and which assumed different names under different leaders such as Military Revolutionary Council and Congress of Armed Forces. The period 1963-1967 was a most confused period with successive coups and counter-coups led by different factions of the military. Finally Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (a major-general) and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (vice air marshall) emerged as victors in this struggle for power. To placate popular opposition against a militarist regime, Thiệu had a constitution drafted and adopted on April 1, 1967. It provided for a separation of powers and an independent judiciary. The respect for basic human rights was confirmed. The President and Vice President were elected by direct ballot for a 4-year term. A Prime-Minister assisted the President in his executive job. There was a bicameral legislature directly elected by the people. Soon after the adoption of the constitution an election was organized, and as was expected in any authoritarian regime, Thiệu and Kỳ were

elected President and Vice-President for a four-year term. But Kỳ was discarded from the ruling team as soon as the first term was over. Thiệu, in a one-candidate election, was re-elected President for a second term. He managed to have the constitution amended so as he could run for a third term. But the Communists did not let him have his own way. South Vietnam fell before his second term came to an end. As with the Constitution of 1956, the Constitution of April 1967 existed only on paper. Civil Rights, separation of powers, democratic process, people's sovereignty, all these big words often repeated by the government were but words devoid of any real substance. All the powers belonged to a group of the military—whether in uniform or not—as they had belonged to a family of civilians under the previous regime.

North Vietnam was ruled by the Communist party which took power in 1945. From 1945 to 1950 the Communists still acted under the guise of nationalists fighting for "independence and democracy". The Vietnamese Communist party was even "dissolved" and took shape of a "Society for the Study of Marxism". Later, it became the Vietnamese Workers' Party. But in 1950, the Communists shed their nationalist clothes and openly advocated a "Socialist" regime for Vietnam, although the Constitution of 1946 was still considered as the guiding principle of their administration. On paper, the people of both North and South Vietnam enjoyed all the formal manifestations of a democracy. Constitutions proclaiming basic human rights and democratic process were adopted. People went to the polls to elect representative officials to rule the country. But in both parts of the country the voters had to elect the candidates previously screened and selected by the government. Elections were but a means to lend a legitimate and democratic facade to an authoritarian regime. There was a great difference, however, between the two regimes. In the South, the citizen could enjoy ownership and "negative" freedom. If he did not overtly criticize or oppose the ruling power he could live his own life without being too much bothered by the government. In the North, the rulers exerted a very tight control over the citizens who were constantly spied upon by political cadres and even by their own folks. Ownership was a crime and criticism of government policy was equated with treason. People were persecuted because they belonged to certain social strata such as intellectuals, property owners and the loosely defined class of "small bourgeois". People were constantly forced to "study" the political lines of the government and to praise the "great achievements of the Party and President Hồ. With the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, the two parts of the

country were re-unified under communist rule. The government overtly recognizes themselves as communists—a term which they had avoided for years—and advocated the building-up of Communism in Vietnam. A systematic program of Communist indoctrination of the South was carried out with "reeducation camps", "new economic zones", and "political study centers". People were persecuted because they had worked for the non-communist regime in South Vietnam or even because they did not enthusiastically support the new regime. It is easy to understand why hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese fled the country on the eve of the fall of Saigon and sought asylum in the non-communist world and why they have been fleeing the Communist regime, often at the risk of their lives, since South Vietnam was taken over by the communists.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Vietnam is essentially an agricultural country. Ninety percent of the population depend on the produce of the soil for their livelihood. Productivity and per capita income are generally low, even by Asian standards.

Rice is the staple crop and the basic diet of the Vietnamese. The areas of cultivation are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the country. Generations of farmers have, through the ages, gradually won land from marshes and forests. The two areas where rice production is most important are the Red River Delta in the North and the Mekong Delta in the South. The Red River Delta is also the area with a highest density in the country (from 1,000 to 2,000 to the square mile).

Before the Communist take-over, agriculture was practiced in the traditional manner. Units were small and individually operated by members of the family. With a few exceptions, methods of farming had not changed much over the centuries. They largely depended on the power of the peasants' muscles and those of animals such as the water buffaloes and cows.

Under the French rule, the production of rice was high enough to feed the people and to export. Rice and rubber were on the top list of products exported by Vietnam. But with the war which started in 1946, rice exports dwindled and finally ceased in 1965. In addition to rice, people grew manioc, beans, sweet potatoes, vegetables and fruit trees, mostly for internal consumption.

Fishing was also an important occupation along the entire coastline. Many edible species of deep-sea fish were known. Rivers and canals also supplied a considerable amount of fish.

A product deriving from fish is *nước mắm* (fish sauce) which constitutes an important element in the diet of the Vietnamese. French policy was guided by two major principles : the exploitation of those natural resources which provided raw materials for France and the reservation of the Indochinese domestic market for French manufactured goods. This resulted in the lack of industrial development in Vietnam. When the French left Indochina, the industry in existence consisted of light manufacturing and processing of local agricultural and forest products. Most industrial plants were concentrated in North Vietnam while the South was more concerned with agriculture. The few industrial plants that existed in South Vietnam were for the processing of agricultural products.

LEISURE AND HOLIDAYS

The Vietnamese is a hard working man but he believes that one should pause from time to time so as to relax and increase one's efficiency. The greatest opportunity for entertainment for all Vietnamese is, no doubt, the Têt Festival which is celebrated on the first day of the first month of the lunar year. The Vietnamese New Year's Day is celebrated for several days. On this special occasion food and drink are prepared for the family and guests. There is no poor man or family who would not make great sacrifice to live up to the special holiday of the year. Têt is a national non-religious holiday in which every one participates, the rich like the poor, the old like the young. Not only are the living but also the dead remembered on this festival. Everybody looks forward to this festival with mingled sentiments of joy, enthusiasm and apprehension, because of the expenses involved (see Appendix 7).

Another holiday which is commonly celebrated by Vietnamese of all walks of life and all over the country is Trung Thu or the Mid-Autumn Festival which is held on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar. This is the occasion for grown-ups to enjoy the beauty of the full moon while eating moon-shaped cakes and drinking tea, and for children to enjoy lion dances and paper lanterns. According to popular belief and legends, the moon is the dwelling place of a fairy of great beauty called Hằng Nga. The moon is also a favorite theme of Vietnamese literature.

Besides these two festivals which are celebrated by everybody in Vietnam and which have no specific religious connotations, there are also holidays related to specific religions and celebrated only by specific religious groups. Christians cele-

brate Christmas to honor the birth of Jesus Christ. A number of non-Christians would also join in the celebration of Christmas, especially Western-educated Vietnamese. Buddhists celebrate the birthday of Buddha on the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar, the date of the enlightenment of Buddha on the 8th day of the 12th month of the lunar calendar, and the Vu-Lan Day (All Soul's Day) on the 15th day of the 7th month to offer prayers for the redemption of the sins committed by the deceased parents and wandering souls. This is especially a holiday dedicated to the virtue of filial piety.

Holidays dedicated to national heroes, such as Hùng Vương, the founder of the Vietnamese nation, the Trưng Sisters, general Trần Hưng Đạo, Emperor Lê Lợi and Emperor Quang-Trung who all were remembered because they had defeated the invading Chinese troops at different periods of history, are but commemorative and patriotic days and not festivals for the entertainment of the Vietnamese people.

Appendix 7

TẾT, THE VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

Although the first of January is a legal holiday in Vietnam, the Vietnamese celebrate their New Year's day on another date—on the first day of the first month of the lunar calendar which varies from year to year between January 19 and February 20. Unlike the first of January which is observed as a holiday by government offices, banks and schools, and celebrated as the Western New Year's day by a few people in urban centers, Tết or the Vietnamese New Year's day is a national holiday celebrated by everyone and all over the country for several days on end. It is not only a holiday, it is also a festival time in which people stop working and enjoy themselves with good food, wine, and merry-making. The date of occurrence of Tết is based on the lunar calendar which is used together with the solar calendar by Vietnamese people. Official dates, transactions and documents are based on the solar calendar but anniversaries of death, traditional and religious celebrations are based on the lunar calendar. The lunar year (on earth, that is!) consists of twelve months having each twenty-nine or thirty days. To catch up with the solar calendar, every four years there is a leap year which consists of thirteen months. Because of the discrepancy between the lunar and the solar calendars, Tết does not fall on the same date in the solar calendar.

Tết is no doubt the most important holiday for the Vietnamese and, for a number of them, especially those living in rural areas, the only holiday in which they can afford to stop all work and indulge in feasting and merry-making for several days. Tết is celebrated to welcome the New Year which is hoped and believed to bring about a new and happy chapter in the life of everyone. It is the celebration of the return of Spring considered as the time of rebirth of nature. It is the time of gathering for members of the family who had to go away from home for work during the year. It is also the time for everybody to "celebrate" his birthday for everyone becomes one year older on New Year's day. A Vietnamese newborn is one year old until the last day of the 12th month of the (lunar) year. He becomes two years old on the first day of the first month of the following year, that is on Tết, even if he was born on the last day of the previous year. In general, a Vietnamese does not celebrate his birthday, except the first one which is, of course, celebrated by his parents because he is too young to celebrate everything[4]. Only a small number

4 If he is a well-to-do person or a high ranking official, he will likely celebrate his birthday again when he reaches the age of forty or fifty and he will do so only once every ten years (that is at the age of 60, 70, etc.) as an expression of thankfulness to Heaven for his longevity. Usually his children will bear all the expenses and take care of the celebration to show their love and gratitude to him.

of young people belonging to wealthy families who have adopted Western habits and customs celebrate birthdays beyond the first one. Officially Tết is celebrated for three days, but it usually lasts for more than ten days. One week before Tết, sometimes much earlier, people start preparations for the great holiday. Houses are white-washed and repainted, furniture and metal utensils are polished, the living room is decorated with flowers to give the home an appearance of newness to match with the renewal in nature. New clothes are made for everybody in the family. For poor people, it may be the only time of the year when they can afford new clothes. A great amount of food is bought for the festive occasion, not only for members of the family but also for guests, relatives, friends, and neighbors who are expected to come for a visit during the holiday.

Tết is the occasion for giving and receiving gifts. Before Tết, usually during the week preceding the New Year, gifts will be offered to one's relatives, close friends, bosses and all those to whom one feels some debt of gratitude for favors or help received during the year. It is the practice that wealthy people will offer presents to their relatives who are less fortunate. Gifts will be presented to in-laws, especially in-laws to be.

Tết is also the occasion for members of the family to gather together under the same roof, not only members who are still alive but also members who are dead. It is a popular belief that the spirit of deceased members of the family will come back from the beyond to spend the Tết festival with those still alive. On the eve of the New Year's Day people will make the rite of food offering before the ancestor's altar to "invite" the spirits of the dead to come home and spend Tết with the family. Even those who do not believe in the existence of the spirit after death still perform the ceremony as it is an occasion for them and their families to remember those beloved persons who have departed.

At midnight of the last day of the (lunar) year, people celebrate Giao Thừa—the transition moment—to bid farewell to the old year and welcome the new one. Firecrackers are exploded in abundance as an expression of joy and happiness and, for those who are superstitious, to chase away the evil spirits from their homes. Believers will go to the temples to offer prayers to Buddha or other deities and beg for heavenly blessings for themselves and their families. In North Vietnam, there is the custom of picking up burgeoning branches from the temple gardens (*hái lộc*) and bringing them home as a symbol of luck and prosperity. The first day of Tết begins with a ritual offering of food made to the ancestors. (This ceremony is renewed on the second and third days. At dusk of the third day another ceremony is performed to bid farewell to the spirits of the ancestors believed to return to the beyond.) After the ceremony, the children will present New Year wishes to their parents (and their grandparents, if they live under the same roof) who will

compliment them for being one year older and give them money, usually wrapped in a red envelope, for them to spend during the holiday. Young children also expect money given them by their older brothers and sisters, their relatives and close friends of their parents. After the New Year breakfast, grown-ups, often accompanied by their children, begin the round of house calls to relatives, in-laws, bosses, friends and neighbors to wish them "health, wealth, longevity and happiness". Everywhere they go they are offered something to eat and drink and they are expected to accept what is offered them. Depending on the number of relatives and friends one has, these duty calls may go on for the whole holiday period. As the first day of Tết has a special significance, it is usually reserved for duty calls paid to parents, parents in-law, relatives of the parent's generation and people for whom one has special respect or affection.

The first visitor who comes to one's house is believed to foreshadow the turn of events that is to occur to one's family in the next twelve months. Therefore, people in mourning will avoid making house calls to relatives and friends, at least on the first day of Tết. In the old days, people even carefully chose the person to make the "first footing" to their house (*đạp đất*) so as to have a year full of good luck and blessing. Of course, the person chosen is someone having a good character, a smiling appearance, a wealthy life, and, if possible, a high social position. People also carefully chose the most auspicious time and direction, according to their horoscope, to get out of their house (xuất hành) on the first day of Tết. Nowadays very few people take the trouble to select the "first footer" to their house or to choose the most auspicious time for their "first outing".

As Tết is believed to be the beginning of a new and happy chapter of his life, everybody will get into a happy mood full of hope, friendliness and good will for other people. Everyday worries will be put aside, mistakes in the past forgotten, wrongs suffered in the old year forgiven. Every effort is made to check one's words and action to avoid coarse language or unbecoming behavior. People do not simply make resolutions to be nice and good, they implement their resolution in words and action during the New Year's days with the belief that this will continue for the whole year.

During the holiday most shops and stores are closed for at least three days and some may be closed for a whole week, except movie houses, theaters, and other places of entertainment which are crowded to the full. People in their newest and best garments stroll leisurely in the streets or converge on places of public entertainment. The festive and colorful atmosphere is enlivened by the exploding noise of firecrakers.

There are certain things which are always associated with Tết and have become the symbols of this Vietnamese holiday. In North

Vietnam, the pink peach blossom (*hoa đào*) adorns almost every house during the New Year festival. Even the poorest man will manage to buy a small branch of peach blossom to "welcome Spring". In Central and South Vietnam it is the yellow apricot blossom (*hoa mai*) which adorns almost every house during the Tết holiday. White apricot blossom, chrysanthemum, dahlia and narcissus are also popular but to a much lesser extent than pink peach blossom and the yellow apricot blossom now thought of as the flowers of Tết and Spring.

Red is the favorite color for it symbolizes good luck and happiness. Most houses are adorned with New Year wishes written on red paper hanging on the walls of the living room and above the front door. In the traditional manner, those words are written in Chinese characters[5] which few people could read. There is also the custom of decorating the house with parallel sentences (*câu đối*) which usually express New Year wishes or depict the pleasures brought about by Tết and Spring. These parallel sentences are written in Chinese characters or in Vietnamese demotic script (*chữ nôm*).

Although various kinds of foods are prepared for the festive season the most typical Tết food is, no doubt, the glutinous rice cakes (*bánh chưng* and *bánh tét*) meat rolls and candied fruits (*mứt*). Beside perfumed tea, wine and rice liquor are common beverages for the occasion.

During the Tết festival people engage in various forms of entertainment. Games are played in family circles as well as in public places. These include special games of dice, cards, literary riddles, movies and theater in town, wrestling, races, buffalo fights, and cock fights in the countryside. Gambling, now illegal, was tolerated during the Tết festival. For old people, going to the traditional theater is one way to find out, from the fate of the main character and the plot of the play, omens of things that would happen to them in the next twelve months.

Nowadays, certain customs and practices related to Tết have fallen into disuse. Few people, if any, will plant a bamboo pole (*cây nêu*) or paint, in lime, a bow and arrow in front of their houses during Tết. Ritual ceremonies offered to the kitchen gods with burning of votive papers, on the day they are supposed to go to Heaven, (the 23rd day of the 12th month) are on the decline But the meaning of Tết remains unchanged for centuries. It is the time of the year for relaxation, entertainment, family gatherings, expressions of good will, and hope for the future. For Vietnamese living overseas, whether by choice or by force of circumstances, Tết has an added meaning: nostalgia. More than any other time of the year, Tết is the time when their thoughts are instinctively transported to their native country, town, and village where

5 The writing system now in use in Vietnam (*chữ quốc ngữ*) is based on the Roman alphabet It was devised in the 17th century by European missionaries but did not become officially adopted until the beginning of this century

their parents, relatives and friends still live and where their beloved ancestors lie buried, to all those places and people that give a real significance to the Vietnamese New Years's festival.

Tết plays an important part in Vietnamese literature as it does in the life of the Vietnamese people. It has been one of the major themes of Vietnamese poetry through the ages. As Vietnamese people celebrate Tết every year, literary works on Tết are produced annually when the New Year's Day is around. Every year, newspapers and magazines publish special issues devoted specially to Tết with poems, short stories, essays, and plays glorifying the New Year holiday and Spring. In the old days, scholars and literary-minded people used to "inaugurate their pens" (*khai-bút*) on the morning of the first day of Tết with a poem or, at least a couplet in the form of parallel sentences dealing with some aspect of Tết and Spring. Parallel sentences are a favorite literary form for Vietnamese people to express feelings and emotions on various occasions, in moments of joy and happiness (as presents for wedding, or longevity celebrations) as well as in hours of sorrow and mourning (as condolences at funerals). They are used to depict religious feelings (as decorations in temples and communal worship houses) as much as to release frustration and anger (as sarcasm directed at enemies). It is customary to have parallel sentences written on red paper to decorate the house during the New Year holiday but for other occasions they are painted on lacquered wood, on glass, or embroidered on silk and velvet. Parallel sentences are usually written in Chinese characters or Vietnamese demotic script[6] and, recently, in Vietnamese alphabet but arranged in such a way that the words look somewhat similar to Chinese characters.

For Tết, parallel sentences usually depict the delights brought about by the holiday, such as:

As Spring comes, peach and apricot trees bring forth their new colorful appearance;
When guests arrive in our house, tea and wine remain the traditional enjoyment of leisure time.

Xuân đáo đào mai tân cảnh sắc;
Khách lai trà tửu cựu phong lưu.

They may express New Year wishes, sometimes with a touch of humor as in the following:

6 The Vietnamese demotic script (*chữ-nôm*) is a type of writing based on Chinese characters to represent the Vietnamese language. It is different from Chinese characters proper which are used to represent the Chinese language. Today very few Vietnamese could read and write the demotic script or Chinese characters.

In the evening of the last day of the year with worries for debts obsessing the mind, the wish is that the holiday occur only once in every ten years;
But in the morning of the first day of Tết with so much food and wine around the house, then the wish is that three days of festivity be extended to ten.

Chiều ba mươi nợ rồi canh tàn, ước những mười năm dồn lại một;
Sáng mồng một rượu chè tràn quý tị, trông cho ba bữa hóa ra mười.

Although the custom of decorating the house with parallel sentences written on red paper has been declining, parallel sentences as a form of literary creation still remain active.

For centuries, Tết has provided a main source of inspiration for Vietnamese poets. Tết is the time for everybody to make New Year wishes and Trần-Tế-Xương, a 19th century poet, made the following wish which seems as appropriate nowadays as it was a century ago:

In imitation of others, I'll extend my New Year wishes;
Mine will be that everyone on earth
Kings, high officials, scholars, common people in every country
Become men and women worthy of the name.

Bắt chước ai ta chúc mấy lời,
Chúc cho khắp hết cả trong đời,
Vua, quan, sĩ, thứ người muôn nước
Sao được cho ra cái giống người.

Tết poems cover the whole gamut of feelings, from the happy mood of a man enjoying the delights of Tết and Spring to the pangs and agonies of a man or woman betrayed by the one who has promised love and fidelity, pangs and agonies rendered more acute by the atmosphere of festivity and happiness brought about by the New Year holiday. A deep sense of nostalgia for people and things of the past is skillfully evoked in the following lines by a modern poet, Vũ Đình Liên:

Every year, when peach and apricot trees brought forth their blossom,
The old scholar would be seen
Displaying red paper and China ink
On the sidewalks where busy crowds passed by.

Many a people who came to hire him write parallel sentences
Praised him for his calligraphy art in these words:

"The strokes of pen drawn by his skillful hands
Are as gracious as phoenixes and dragons dancing and flying."

But people who came to hire him grew fewer and fewer every year,
Where were now all those people who had come for his skills?
The red paper did not bother to keep its color gorgeous
And the ink became coagulated in the sorrowful ink slab.

The old scholar was still sitting there.
Passers-by now ignored him.
Yellow leaves fell on the red paper
And the drizzle fell over the town.

This year the peach trees bring forth their blossoms again
But the old scholar is nowhere to be seen.
Where are now the souls of those
Who lived long ago in bygone days?

Mỗi năm..hoa đào nở
Lại thấy ông đồ già
Đem mực tàu giấy đỏ
Bên phố đông người qua

Bao nhiêu người thuê viết
Tấm tắc ngợi khen tài
Hoa tay thảo những nét
Như phượng múa rồng bay

Những mỗi năm mỗi vắng
Người thuê viết nay đâu ?
Giấy đỏ buồn thắm
Mực đọng trong nghiên sầu

Ông đồ vẫn ngồi đấy
Qua đường không ai hay
Lá vàng rơi trên giấy
Ngoài trời mưa bụi bay

Năm nay đào lại nở
Không thấy ông đồ xưa
Những người muốn năm cũ
Hồn ở đâu bây giờ ?

In general, Tết is the time for joy and hope. But for a broken heart

it is merely an occasion for dejection and gloomy broodjng as witnessed by the following lines by another modern poet, Nguyên Bính:

Huyền-Trân, my beloved Huyền-Trân, Spring has come!
All the flowers on earth are now blooming
But my heart alone remains closed with sorrow.

Huyền-Trân ơi, Huyền-Trân ơi, mùa xuân rồi!
Gió đầy chín vạn hoa trời nở
Duy có lòng ta khép lại thôi.

Tết has also been a main source of inspiration for anonymous authors of folk lyrics and folk tales. Frequent references are made to Tết and Spring in the folk lyrics which are sung by rural youth during the New Year festival. Vietnamese children are delighted to hear folk tales on things related to Tết, such as the glutinous rice cakes, peach blossoms, or the bamboo pole. As long as Tết is still celebrated, it will remain a favorite theme for Vietnamese poets and writers.

Chapter VII

MAN IN RELATION TO NATURE

For the Vietnamese, nature does not merely afford a material background against which man lives and earns his livelihood. She also takes part in the affective and spiritual world of man. There are emotional ties between the Vietnamese and his natural environment.

Nature is not viewed as indifferent and soulless. She seems to share man's feelings and emotions. The Vietnamese common man often perceives in nature the reflection of his own joy and sadness. On the other hand, everything in nature has an impact on him. A change in the weather or the sight of the sunshine on the trees may arouse in him certain feelings and emotions. This is because the life of the Vietnamese greatly depends on nature, much more than the Western man. Whether the rain falls or the sun shines, the Vietnamese man turns his thoughts to the effects which those natural phenomena may exert on his crop in the field.

Out of his direct experience and observations, the Vietnamese common man has gained knowledge on nature and natural phenomena. He uses this knowledge, which is often expressed in proverbs and folk songs, to guide himself in weather prediction, in agricultural works, and in the control of natural calamities. By observing the sky, the clouds, the moon, the stars, rainbows, domestic animals, birds and insects, he can predict weather changes. This knowledge helps him adjust to the environment and in his process of making a living.

Living amidst nature the Vietnamese continually has to test his intelligence and strength against natural forces. Sometimes he is successful but other times he is overcome by destructive forces of nature. Drought, floods and typhoons often render useless his continuous efforts, and the consequences of those natural calamities are often famine and starvation. Perhaps the feeling of helplessness and constant fear have inspired the Vietnamese to consider natural catastrophes as provoked by supernatural forces and led him to deify nature.

But the spiritual communion between man and nature is not based only on mingled feelings of awe and fear and colored with mysticism and superstition. Nature also appears to the Vietnamese as invested with beauty and poetry. Moon and stars, clouds and sky, mountains and rivers, plants and flowers, everything in nature (with the exception of destructive elemental

forces) awakens in man intense joy and deep affection.

Among the celestial bodies, the moon has a special attraction for the Vietnamese and occupies a special place in his heart. The moon is often a companion of the Vietnamese common man in his work in the rice fields as well as in his moments of leisure. Like the Chinese, the Vietnamese people used to set up their calendar according to the movements of the moon around the earth. Even today, when the Western calendar is used throughout the country in official business, some important holidays and festivals are still based on the lunar calendar. Among these are the Tết festival, the Mid-Autumn festival, and the anniversaries of the dead. The moon is also one of the most popular subject-matters of Vietnamese poetry and folk tales. Of course, it is the mystical and poetical aspects of the moon that the Vietnamese are interested in, not the matter-of-fact and scientific aspects of the earth's natural satellite. In the Vietnamese language the moon has become the symbol of femininity and beauty. The metaphor "Fairy of the Moon" (*Hằng-Nga*) refers to a beautiful woman.

Animals are part of the daily world of the Vietnamese common man and share life with him in a direct way. They keep him company, help him with his labor, or remind him of the passing of time. They are a source of economic prosperity and form part of his subsistence. In his close contact with the natural world, the Vietnamese man comes to perceive in the animals their characteristics, their habits, and their friendly or hostile inclinations. This sense of observation is part of his equipment for a successful adaptation to the environment.

The characteristics of animals, true or supposed, are commonly used for comparisons and allusions about man himself. The water buffalo, which enjoys great esteem and love from the Vietnamese peasant, represents patience, strength and endurance, qualities that are characteristic of the Vietnamese rural people. The cat usually stands for hypocrisy and treachery and the fox for wile and craftiness. Unlike Americans who consider the owl as the symbol of wisdom, the Vietnamese believe that the owl is the messenger of death, a bird of ill omen and a symbol of evil and ugliness. Toads and frogs stand for narrow-minded and ignorant people while the butterfly is a metaphor for a flighty and inconsistent lover. Animals are also given human feeling and emotions. They are thought to have retained much of the innocence and goodness lost in man. The general attitude is one of acceptance and sympathy for the animals.

Plants, trees, and flowers also form part of the natural en-

vironment of the Vietnamese who perceive in them not only the utilitarian aspect but also the esthetic and emotional facets. The Vietnamese common man is very fond of flowers. He has a marked preference for flowers with fragrance. The flower has become a symbol of beauty and femininity. The color and shape of the petals stand for women's physical beauty and the fragrance of the pollen is the symbol of women's virtue. This love for flowers is reflected in the custom of naming girls after the names of beautiful and fragrant flowers.

Nature in its manifold aspects has a great appeal to the heart, the mind, and the senses of the Vietnamese. In spite of the awareness of the dangers caused by destructive elemental forces, nature is viewed with love and sensitivity. This attitude seems to be the result of a successful adaptation of the Vietnamese to the natural environment.

Chapter VIII

MAN IN RELATION TO VALUES

The Vietnamese value system is based on four basic factors: allegiance to the family, yearning for a good name, love of learning, and respect for other people. These factors are closely interrelated.

ALLEGIANCE TO THE FAMILY

The most important factor in the value system of the Vietnamese is, no doubt, the family. As discussed in Chapter III, the family is the center of the Vietnamese common man's preoccupation and the backbone of Vietnamese society. By virtue of the principle of collective and mutual responsibility, each individual will strive to be a pride of his family.

A misconduct of an individual is blamed not only on himself, but also on his parents, siblings, relatives and ancestors. Likewise, any success or fame achieved by an individual will bring honor and pride to all members of his family. The Vietnamese child is taught from early childhood to readily forget himself for the sake of his family's welfare and harmony. Central to the concept of family is the obligation of filial piety (*hiếu thảo*) which is considered the most essential of all virtues in Vietnamese society. The child ought to be grateful to his parents for the debt of birth, rearing, and educating by the parents. He is taught to think of his parents and ancestors first, even at his own expense, to make sacrifices for his parents' sake, to love and care for them in their old age. The Vietnamese man who lacks filial piety is looked down upon and ostracized not only by his own family but also by the community.

The profound love for and attachment to the family is extended to the physical setting in which the family perpetuates: the native village. The dearest wish of the Vietnamese common man is, as a proverb puts it, to die in his own native village and amidst his own folk *as a leaf which leaves the branch to fall down on the ground at the foot of the tree* (*lá rụng về cội*). The native village is not only the place where he was born and brought up and where his parents and family live but also a place where his ancestors are buried. Many Vietnamese, especially people in the rural areas, never move out of their native village or province. This deep attachment to the native village explains the lack of horizontal mobility in Vietnamese society.

THE CONCEPT OF "GOOD NAME"

Another factor of importance in the value scale of the Vietnamese is the concept of "good name", or more precisely "fragrant name" (*danh thơm*), as it is said in the Vietnamese language. To the Vietnamese, a good name is better than any material possession in this world. By securing a good name for himself, a man can command respect and admiration from his fellow countrymen. A rich and powerful person with a bad reputation is looked down upon while a poor man with a good name is respected. It is believed that the best thing that a man can leave behind once he has departed from this world and by which he will be remembered is a good reputation. *After death, a tiger leaves behind his skin, a man his reputation*, says a proverb. The desire to have a good name, not only in his life time but also after death, betrays the deep aspiration of the Vietnamese to survive the disintegration of his corporeal frame after death in the memory of his progeny and community.

A man with a bad name will be despised by his fellow countrymen and become a disgrace for his family. He will lose face, which is a terrible thing in an immobile society where almost everybody knows anybody else in the community. To acquire a good name, a man must avoid all words and actions which may damage his dignity and honor. There are three ways by which he can acquire a good name: either by heroic deeds, or by intellectual achievements or by moral virtues. Leading a virtuous life is the easiest and surest path to a good name for there are few opportunities in our everyday life to be heroic and few people are endowed with exceptional intellectual qualities. The virtues most cultivated are the sense of honor, honesty, righteousness modesty, generosity and disdain for material gains, virtues most extolled by the Confucian doctrine. In view of the strong solidarity of the Vietnamese family, it is not surprising to know that the Vietnamese strives for a good name not only for himself but also for his parents and children.

LOVE OF LEARNING

The Vietnamese common man seems to have a great love for knowledge and learning. He seems to have particular respect and admiration for learned people. Like the virtuous man, the learned man enjoys great prestige in Vietnamese society. Often, they are the one and same man. The Vietnamese conceives that knowledge and virtues are but the two complementary aspects

of the ideal man.

People associated with knowledge and learning such as scholars, writers, and teachers have been highly respected, not only by the students but also by parents and people from all walks of life. Learning is considered more valuable than wealth and material success. Rich people who are not educated are often looked down upon by other people and they themselves feel inferior to learned people who are poor. In the traditional social system, the scholar ranked first, before the farmer, artisan, and tradesman. Even nowadays, the learned man is held in high esteem and respect.

The love of learning does not spring from purely disinterested motives. The lure of prestige and the prospect of improved social status are among the strongest incentives to the pursuit of knowledge. Education represents the essential stepping-stones to the social ladder and good job opportunities. It is the prime motive for vertical mobility in Vietnamese society.

THE CONCEPT OF RESPECT

The Vietnamese common man is expected to show respect to people who are senior to him in age, status, or position. At home, he should show respect to his parents, older siblings, and older relatives. This is expressed by obedience in words and action. Respect is part of the concept of filial piety.

Outside the family, respect should be paid to elderly people, teachers, clergymen, supervisors and employers, and people in high positions. Learned and virtuous people enjoy special respect and admiration. But respect is not a one-way behavior. The Vietnamese common man also expects other people to show respect to him, by virtue of his age, status, or position. Special respect is gained by leading a virtuous life, by accomplishing certain heroic deeds or by achieving a high degree of intellectuality.

Respect is expressed by specific behavior patterns and by definite linguistic devices[7] inherent in the Vietnamese language. It is one of the essential factors in the value system of the Vietnamese people.

7 See Chapter IV.

Chapter IX

MAN IN RELATION TO VALUES: EDUCATION SYSTEM

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the French domination in the second half of the 19th century, education in Vietnam was deeply influenced by Chinese culture. The government did not finance or supervise the education of the people, it only controlled the competitive examinations for the recruitment of officials. Instruction was given in the home of scholar teachers, in the pagodas by Buddhist monks or in the home of the students by private tutors. The program of study included Chinese language and literature, Confucian classics, history and military tactics. The medium of instruction was Chinese and textbooks were written in Chinese characters. Formal training was sanctioned by a series of rigorous competitive examinations organized by the government. Candidates were examined first in their provinces. If they succeeded, they would be examined in the Capital, at Hue. These examinations took place every three years. Those who passed the examinations became government officials.

Under the French rule, education in Vietnam underwent a drastic change. The introduction of Western learning and the abolition of the classical examinations in 1918 brought about the decline of education based on Chinese language and Confucian classics. In 1917 the French established a standard system of French education in Indochina, providing for a uniform syllabus for all schools. The medium of instruction was French, starting from the second grade. Elementary education covered a period of six years at the end of which the students had to pass an examination for the Certificate of Primary Studies. Secondary education covered a period of seven years at the end of which the students had to pass the Baccalaureate (both parts I and II) to graduate. Higher education was provided by the University of Hanoi, established in 1917. The teaching staff was entirely French, the curriculum was the same as that adopted in French Universities.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

With the downfall of the French colonial rule in March 1945 and the establishment of the first Vietnamese national govern-

ment headed by Trần Trọng Kim, education in Vietnam took a new shape. Although the school system was still basically patterned after the French system, the medium of instruction was, for the first time, the Vietnamese language and the curriculum was adapted to the needs of a new nation. After the Geneva Agreement in 1954, two different systems of education were adopted in the two parts of Vietnam. In the North, education was patterned after Marxist model with emphasis on political indoctrination. In the South, education was patterned after the humanist model of the Western world with concern for the full development of the individual. Since the Communist take-over of South Vietnam, the educational system of the reunified Vietnam has been organized according to the Marxist doctrine which laid more emphasis on political indoctrination than on academic or vocational subjects.

Prior to May 1975, education in South Vietnam was highly centralized. All levels and aspects of education were under the control of the Ministry of Education which assumed different names under different administrations such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Youth, the Ministry of Education and Youth, and the Ministry of National Education. Curricula, subjects taught and their contents, student assessment and placement, teacher preparation and recruitment, school budgets, all those things were planned and controlled by the Ministry of Education. The program of study was uniform throughout the country for all schools, both public and private.

The educational system of South Vietnam consisted of three levels: elementary, secondary, and higher education.

Elementary education

It consisted of five years of schooling. It was free and compulsory but compulsory education was enforced loosely even in those areas where facilities were available. The curriculum of elementary schools emphasized the Vietnamese language, national history, geography and civics for the early grades. For the upper grades, additional subjects included moral education, general science and arithmetics. Prior to 1960, elementary school students had to take a graduation examination leading to the Certificate of Primary Studies.

Secondary education

It consisted of 7 years of schooling with two levels: the first

level which required four years, from grade 6 through grade 9, and the second level which required three years, from grade 10 through grade 12. The first level of secondary education provided students with general knowledge while the second level provided them with more specialized learning. In order to enter the 6th grade, students must pass a competitive entrance examination.

Prior to 1960, a student who had completed the first level of secondary education must pass an examination for the Certificate of Trung-Học Đệ Nhất Cấp (Secondary education, first cycle) which was required for proceeding to the second level. Until 1972, a student who had completed the grade 11 was required to pass a national examination for the Certificate of Tú-Tài Phần I (Baccalaureate, Part I) in order to enter grade 12.

At the end of grade 12, students had to take the graduation examination of Tú-Tài Toàn Phần (Baccalaureate, part II). This examination was organized on the same days throughout the country. It was held twice a year, in May and July. The Tú Tài diploma was evidence that the student had graduated from the secondary school. It was also a requirement to enter the university.

The student who entered secondary education had four options to choose from: general or academic schools, technical and vocational schools, agricultural schools and comprehensive schools.

General Education schools

The program in this type of school was essentially academic. It prepared the students for colleges and universities. The majority of students enrolled in this type of school. In the first four years (first cycle), the school offered a common core of general knowledge essential for the student to go into specialized studies in the last three years. There was one foreign language required at this level. In the last three years (second cycle) the students had to choose one of the four following tracks:

Section A (Experimental Science Section) with emphasis on natural science, physics and chemistry.

Section B (Mathematics Section) with emphasis on mathematics, physics, and chemistry.

Section C (Modern Languages) with emphasis on literature,

foreign languages and philosophy.

Section D (Classical Languages) with emphasis on literature, classical languages (Latin or Chinese characters), and philosophy.

Whatever track the student may choose, he had to take two foreign languages in the second cycle of the secondary education (See Appendix 8, for required subjects for secondary school students).

All the prescribed courses for each track are required and there were no electives in this system of education.

Technical and Vocational schools

It consisted of five grades, from grade 8 to 12. With the 1973 reform, technical and vocational schools started with grade 10, that is the second cycle of secondary education. At the end of grade 12, students had to take the Baccalaureate examination (Technical section) to graduate.

Agricutural Schools

It also consisted of five grades, from grade 8 to grade 12. With the 1973 reform, agricultural schools started with grade 10.

Comprehensive Schools

The comprehensive school was officially introduced by the Ministry of Education in 1972. Besides the four sections of the college preparatory program of the general education school, the comprehensive high school offered four vocational majors: Home Economics, Business Education, Industrial Arts and Agriculture[8].

Besides public schools, there were also private schools for elementary and secondary education. Private schools were also controlled and supervised by the Ministry of Education and had to follow the same curriculum as public schools. Generally speaking, the quality of private schools was lower than that of public schools.

8 For a comprehensive description of the secondary education curriculum, see "*Translation of the Republic of Vietnam's Curriculum of Secondary Comprehensive Education*", California State Department of Education, 1977.

Higher education

To be admitted to higher education, a student must have a "baccalaureate" diploma. Some colleges required students to pass a competitive entrance examination for admission. Higher education in state universities was free.

There were two types of higher education: Junior College and University.

Junior College

This type of higher education was of recent date. The following Junior Colleges were set up in the 1970's:

- The Duyên Hải Junior College at Nha Trang (1973) which specialized in fisheries and oceanography.
- The Tiền-Giang Junior College at Mỹ-Tho (1973) which specialized in agriculture and animal husbandry.
- The Quảng-Đà Junior College at Đà-Nẵng (1974) which specialized in business and mechanics.
- The Qui-Nhơn Junior College at Qui-Nhơn (1975) which specialized in agriculture and industrial arts.

Universities

This is the traditional type of higher education in Vietnam. Each university consisted of several faculties. Universities are administered by a Rector appointed by the Chief of State. Under the Rector were the Deans of the faculties who were also members of the teaching staff. A considerable degree of autonomy was accorded to the respective faculties.

The duration of the course of study varied from faculty to faculty. The courses in the Faculties of Letters, Law, and Pedagogy covered four years. Examinations were given at the end of each year and certificates were awarded to successful students. After successful completion of four years' work, evidenced by the number of required Certificates obtained, the student earned the degree of Cử-Nhân (B.A.). The diploma of Cao-Học (M.A.) required at least one year after the B.A. and the Tiến-Sĩ (Doctorate) required 2 or 3 years of additional work and the completion of a dissertation. The courses in Medicine covers seven years' work (for the M.D.), in Architecture six years and Pharmacy and Dentistry 5 years.

In 1975 there were four State Universities: University of Saigon, University of Huế, University of Cần-Thơ and the Thủ-

Đức Polytechnic University. Beside colleges and universities, post-secondary education was also offered in "Institutes" and "National Schools" such as the National Institute of Administration, the National School of Fine Arts, the National Institute of Oceanography, the National Schools of Music and Drama at Hue and Saigon etc... These institutions of higher education were also controlled by the Ministry of Education.

There were ten private institutions of higher education the majority of which were affiliated to a church or religious sect[9].

Teacher education was provided by two different types of institutions. Normal schools prepared elementary school teachers with a two-year program. There were fifteen normal schools in Saigon and in some large cities. The Faculties of Pedagogy of the Universities of Saigon, Hue, and Can-tho were in charge of the training of the secondary school teachers. They offered a two-year program for junior-high school teachers and four-year program for senior-high school teachers. In order to be admitted into those programs the students must possess the Baccalaureate and pass a highly competitive entrance examination. After graduation, they would be appointed full-time teachers by the Ministry of Education and assigned to schools in various parts of the country.

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9 Seven private colleges and universities were affiliated to a church or religious sect:

- Dalat University, 1958 (Roman Catholic), specializing in teacher education.
- Vạn Hạnh University in Saigon, 1964 (Buddhist), with emphasis on Eastern philosophy and studies of Sanskrit.
- Minh Đức University in Saigon, 1970 (Roman Catholic) with a well equipped Medical School.
- Cao Đài University at Tây Ninh, 1971 (Cao Đài).
- Hòa Hảo University at Long Xuyen, 1972 (Hòa Hảo).
- Regina Pacis College in Saigon, 1972 (Roman Catholic), a college of liberal arts and business for girls.
- Lasan University in Saigon, 1974 (Christian Brothers), specializing in technology.

In addition, there were 3 other private lay institutions in Saigon of recent creation:

- Thành Nhân Teacher Training Institute (1970).
- Cửu Long University (1973), specializing in mass media and business.
- Tri Hành College of Business and Management (1974).

Appendix 8

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
(HOURS PER WEEK)

SUBJECT	Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	G 5
1. Vietnamese Language					
a. Vocabulary & Reading	5.5	3.6	3.6	3.75	3.75
b. Recitation	.1	1	1.5	.50	.50
c. Penmanship	2.5	1	1	.50	.50
d. Dictation/Grammar	.50	1.33	1.5	1.75	1.75
e. Composition		1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
2. Moral Ed.& Civics	2.12	2.12	2.60	2.50	2.50
3. History			1	1	1
4. Geography			1	1	1
5. Math	2.5	3	3	3.90	3.90
6. Drawing	1.60	.90	.90	.90	.90
7. Home Economics (girls only)				1.90	1.90
8. Activities	1	1	2	2	2
9. Science	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
10. Physical Ed	1.60	1.60	1.60	2	2
11. Child Care (girls only)				.50	.50

Appendix 9

SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM FIRST CYCLE
(HOURS PER WEEK)

SUBJECT	Gr 6	Gr 7	Gr 8	Gr 9
Vietnamese	6	6	6	6
History	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Geography	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Civics	1	1	1	2
Modern Language (French or English)	6	6	5	5
Mathematics	3	3	3.5	3.5
Natural Science	1	1.5	1.5	2
Physics	1	1	1.5	1.5
Chemistry	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	22	22.5	22.5	24
Physical Education and Youth Activities	3	3	3	3
Handicraft (for boys)	1	1	1	1
Home Economics (for girls)	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	28	28.5	28.5	30

Appendix 10

SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM SECOND CYCLE
(HOURS PER WEEK)

REQ'D SUBJ	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12	Sections
Vietnamese	5 5	4 6	2 3	A,B C,D
History - Geography	3 3	3 3	2 3	A,B C,D
Civics	2	2	1	A,B,C,D
Philosophy	0 0 0	0 0 0	3 4 8	B A C,D
Modern Language I	4 6	4 6	3 6	A,B C,D
Modern Language II	0 4 6	0 4 6	0 3 4	D A,B C
Classical Language (Latin or Chinese)	0 6	0 6	0 4	A,B,C D
Physics	.5 3	.5 3	.5 5	C,D A,B
Chemistry	.5 1.5	.5 1.5	.5 2	C,D A,B
Mathematics	1 4 6	1 4 6	1 4 8	C,D A B
Natural Science	1 3	1 3	1 4	B,C,D A
TOTAL (Min Max)	25-27.5	26-28.5	28-30	
ELECTIVES Boys Girls	2 3	2 3	2 3	

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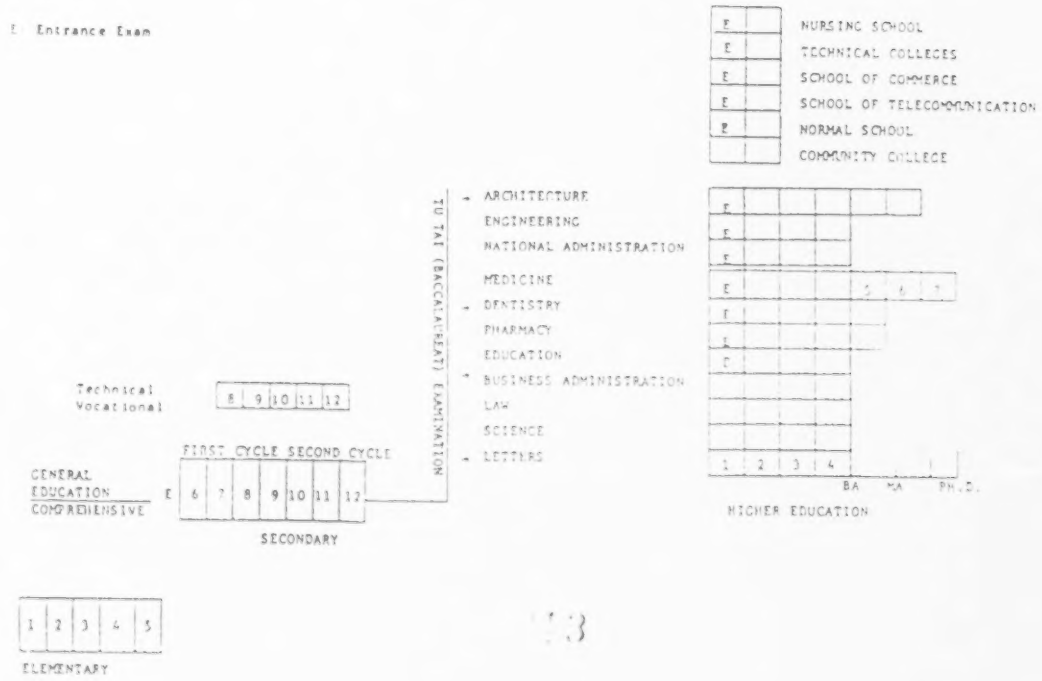
SCHOOL SYSTEM IN VIETNAM (PRIOR TO MAY 1975)



Appendix 11

Chapter X

MAN FACING HIS DESTINY: RELIGION IN VIETNAM

Religion has exerted a deep influence on Vietnamese culture and the Vietnamese concept of life. As we will see in the next chapter, the Vietnamese attitude towards life, death, and the world beyond bears a deep imprint of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism.

BUDDHISM

The predominant religion in Vietnam is Buddhism, which is also one of the world's great religions. Buddhism was introduced into Vietnam under the Chinese domination, in the second century B.C., by Chinese immigrants and by Indian preachers coming by sea. It became the state religion of Vietnam under the Lý dynasty (1010-1214). Several kings took the cassock or retired into a pagoda after their abdication. Buddhist monks served as counselors to the king at court. Since the Trần Dynasty (1225-1440), Buddhism has lost the status of a state religion but nevertheless remained the dominant religion in Vietnam.

Buddhism was originated in India by Shiddharta (563-483 B.C.) or Gautama Buddha, which means the Enlighted One. According to Buddha, *man was born in this world to suffer*. The cause of suffering is the craving for wealth, fame, and power which necessarily brings about frustration and disappointment. In order to be free from suffering, man must suppress its ultimate cause: craving. He must not be attached to anything in this "world of appearance" and live a virtuous life according to the Eightfold Path which consists of the *right views, right thought, right conduct, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation*. An individual's fate in this existence is determined by what he did in the previous existence. This is the law of *Karma*, or cause and effect.

The soul does not perish when one dies, but will reincarnate in another existence and this will go on and on. The Buddhist's goal is to be freed from this circle of reincarnation and reach *Nirvana*, which is a state of complete redemption and supreme happiness. Theoretically, any person may become a Buddha by suppressing craving and following the Eightfold Path but those who actually attain Buddhahood are rare.

There are two branches of Buddhism: Hinayana (Little Vehicle), also called Theravada, which flourishes in Ceylon and Southern Asia, and Mahayana (Great Vehicle) which flourishes in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Most Vietnamese Buddhists belong to the Mahayana branch. The Theravada branch is made of ethnic Cambodians and Vietnamese living in the Mekong Delta. The great majority of Vietnamese people regard themselves as Buddhists but not all of them actively participate in Buddhist rituals at the pagoda. For centuries, the Buddhist clergy had not been organized into a hierarchic system. Each pagoda was completely autonomous of others and was entirely administered by local individuals or community. The first attempt to organize Buddhism on a national scale was achieved by the General Buddhist Association in 1955. Further efforts culminated in the establishment of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam in 1964.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism is more of a religious and social philosophy than a religion in the accepted meaning of the word. It has no church, no clergy, and no Bible. It advocates a code of social behavior that man ought to observe so as to live in harmony in society and attain happiness in his individual life. There is little concern about death, the world beyond, and mystic feelings in this religion.

Confucius, or Kung Fu-tzo (551-479 B.C.), the founder of this religion, stressed the improvement of the moral self as the basic duty of the individual as well as the statesman. In order to *rule the world, one must rule one's country; in order to rule the country, one must rule one's family; and in order to rule the family, one must have control of oneself.* Consequently, the improvement of the moral self is the cornerstone of Confucianism. Confucius believes that man is born with an essentially good nature which becomes corrupted in his contact with society. In order to improve his moral self and regain that original good nature with which he was born, man must practice the five cardinal virtues of benevolence (仁); propriety (禮); loyalty (義); intellect (智) and trustworthiness (信). In order to keep harmony in the nation and happiness in the family, man must observe the three basic relationships of sovereign and subject, father and son, and husband and wife. On the national level the basic virtue is loyalty to the sovereign, on the family level, the basic virtue is filial piety. The ritual expression of filial piety is ancestor worship.

Confucianism was introduced into Vietnam as early as the first century, during the Chinese domination. Two Chinese governors at that time, Hsi Kwang and Jen Yen, were most instrumental in its introduction. It was after Vietnam reconquered independence that Chinese influence and Confucianism became important in Vietnam. Because of its political philosophy which was favorable for the monarchy, Confucianism was promoted and supported by the government. In 1253 the Institute for National Studies (Quốc-Học Viện) was founded by the King to teach the classical books of Confucius. Under the Lê Dynasty, studies of the Confucian doctrine attained their climax. With the French conquest and the influence of Western philosophies, Confucianism was on the decline. However, it still pervades the thinking and behavior of Vietnamese people from all walks of life.

TAOISM

Another religion which has a deep imprint on the way of life of the Vietnamese is Taoism. Lao Tse (600-500 B.C.), the founder of Taoism, advocated a philosophy of harmony between man and man and between man and nature. To achieve this state of harmony, all forms of confrontation should be avoided. The virtues of simplicity, patience, and self-contentment must be observed. By non-action and keeping away from human strife and cravings, man can reach harmony with himself, other people, and the universe. Reason and knowledge cannot lead man to the right path (Tao) which can be reached only by inward probing and quiet meditation.

In essence, Taoism was a religious philosophy. However, the followers of Lao Tse transformed it into a religion with a church and a clergy involved in the communication with deities, spirits and the dead. Taoist clergymen claimed they could cure illness, alleviate misfortune, and predict the future.

Taoism was introduced into Vietnam during the Chinese domination period. By the time Vietnam recovered its independence, it had become one of the main religious faiths of the Vietnamese people. Under King Lý Nhân-Tôn (1072-1127), the examination for the recruitment of officials consisted of essays on the "three religions". Under the succeeding dynasties, Taoism became a source of inspiration for poets and writers of Vietnam. From the end of the Trần dynasty, Taoism began to turn mainly to mysticism and polytheism. It was this mystic aspect of Taoism that appealed to the common people of Vietnam.

CHRISTIANITY

Although a main religion of the world, Christianity does not play a major role in the culture of Vietnam. It was introduced into Vietnam rather late, in the second half of the sixteenth century by European missionaries, especially Portuguese, Spanish and French. The first missionary, Ignatio, came to Vietnam in 1533. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits came to Vietnam and founded in Hội-An the Cochinchina's mission. In 1626, Alexandre de Rhodes was chosen to head the Jesuit mission in North Vietnam. He published a catechism book in Latin and Vietnamese in 1650 and the first Vietnamese, Portuguese and Latin dictionary in 1651 in Rome. Christianity began to develop rapidly. About the middle of the seventeenth century, preaching of Christianity was banned in Vietnam. Despite the proscription, Catholic missions continued to work for the evangelization of Vietnam. Under the Nguyễn dynasty, especially under Kings Minh-Mạng, Thiệu Trị, and Tự-Đức, the Christians were persecuted and labelled "perverse to the public order." Using the persecution of Christians as a pretext, the French conquered Vietnam in the second half of the nineteenth century. Under the French administration, the Catholics enjoyed the support of the government. It was during the Ngô Đình Diệm regime that the Catholics filled key positions in the government, the army, and the police. Today there are about two million Christians, most of them Catholics– out of a population of 56 million. Although they represented a small percentage of the population, the Catholics played an important role in the political life of Vietnam in the last three decades prior to the fall of Saigon in 1975.

MINOR RELIGIONS

There are two religious sects, Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, which had recently been established in Vietnam but confined to the rural sectors of the Southern Delta region. Their influence on Vietnamese culture had been insignificant.

Caodaism is a synthesis of different beliefs including the teaching of Buddha, Jesus, Confucius, Lao-Tse, Victor Hugo, etc... It was founded in 1919 by Lê Văn Trung who established a priestly hierarchy modelled on the Roman Catholic lines. The seat of the headquarters is in Tây Ninh, about 60 miles from Saigon. The adherents to Caodaism have been estimated at about one million.

Hòa Hảo is a reformed Buddhist sect of the Theravada variety. It was founded in 1939 by Hùynh-Phú-Sổ, who later on

was killed by the Communists. This religious sect is concentrated in the Mekong delta with a membership estimated at about two million.

CONCLUSION

One important feature of the religious attitude of the Vietnamese is his great tolerance. There has never been religious fanaticism or religious warfare in Vietnam. The persecution of Catholics under the reign of Tự Đức was carried out by a government which suspected the missionaries and Christian converts as spies for foreign powers. It was not carried out by believers of other religions against the Christians.

The religious belief of the common Vietnamese is a synthesis of the three traditional religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) which have been coexisting peacefully for centuries in Vietnam.

Chapter XI

MAN FACING HIS DESTINY: THE VIETNAMESE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

LIFE AND DEATH

The philosophy of life of the Vietnamese bears the deep imprint of the various religions examined in the previous chapter. The Buddhist influence can be discerned in the view of life on earth as something transient and instable. "Life is but an empty dream," and all wordly riches, honors, and positions are temporary. Fully conscious of the tragic elements in man's destiny, the Vietnamese, nevertheless, have an attitude of acceptance towards life which almost amounts to stoicism. He seems to be content with his fate, no matter how humble it may be. This attitude of self-contentment reflects the Taoist view of life.

In the view of the Vietnamese common man, life on earth is but a temporary stop on his journey to death and other reincarnations. Since death is viewed as inexorable and inherent in the human condition and regulated by the Supreme Being, the Vietnamese accepts it with composure. It was a common custom in Vietnam, especially in rural areas, for people to have a coffin ready in their houses as a preparation for death which may come ten or twenty years later. Well-to-do people used to build their own tombs long before they felt they were approaching death. This composure should not be construed as absence of sadness and regret. The Vietnamese believes that, in spite of its seamy side, life is still better than death which is shrouded in mystery. Death, for the Vietnamese, does not mean total disappearance. Only the corporeal frame is disintegrated, the spirit survives and perpetuates in a series of reincarnations. The belief in the survival of the soul forms the spiritual basis for ancestor worship while the feeling of gratitude and affection for one's forebears forms its moral foundation. The institution of ancestor worship, which bears witness to the influence of Confucianism on Vietnamese culture, reflects the profound desire of the Vietnamese to survive in the heart and memory of his beloved ones after he has gone to the world beyond. Ancestor worship is shared by Vietnamese people of all faiths, except perhaps the converts to Christianity. Most families have an ancestral altar placed in a prominent place in the main room of the house. The ancestral altar is set with incense burners and candle sticks together with

the ancestral tablets and pictures. The head of the family is responsible for the proper veneration of the dead ancestors. On the anniversary of death of each ancestor, special rites are performed which consist of making sacrifice offerings, burning incense, bowing and praying before the altar. This is an occasion for members of the family, relatives, and even close friends to gather together and have good food and wine. Besides the individual anniversaries, sacrifices are offered to the ancestors on such holidays as the New Year's Day, the Mid-Autumn Festival, the All Soul's Day etc... Whenever there is an occasion of family joy or sorrow– wedding, birth, promotion or funeral– rites are performed to honor the ancestors and get them informed of the special event.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD

The Vietnamese common man believes in one Supreme Being whose sovereignty extends over the entire universe. This being, the creator of all things and beings but created by no one, has no earthly origin or connection.

This Supreme Being, called Trời (Heaven), governs the universe and directs all his affairs with absolute wisdom. Although nobody can see him, he sees everything and knows everything. Nobody can deceive him or conceal anything from him. He sees both the visible and the invisible; he knows the past as well as the future.

As the creator of man and nature, he is full of mercy for mankind and all beings created by him. He provides for each one to have his share of food and happiness. As the judge of the universe, he rewards virtues and punishes sins according to his laws of justice. He stretches forth his hands and assists the good in moments of difficulty or danger. He punishes the wicked with miserly and misfortune. One may sometimes escape the punishment of the law or the condemnation of public opinion but one can never escape the fair judgment of Heaven. Heaven is a moral God standing on the side of truth and justice.

The belief in Heaven as an omniscient, omnipotent, and just God does not preclude the importance of man's freedom and responsibility. In the last analysis, man remains the actual author of his own happiness and misfortune. Heaven is only a judge who rewards or punishes man according to his deeds. Therefore, the right way by which one can achieve happiness and peace in this life is to follow Heaven's voice and teaching.

THE NOTION OF FATE

The Vietnamese seem to believe that there is an element of fate in man's life which may help or hinder the individual's effort. Marriage, wealth, position all are predestined. However, the Vietnamese does not view fate as a blind force striking mankind indiscriminately, but as the expression of the will of Heaven (*Trời*, the omniscient, merciful, and just God. Our fate in this life is but a consequence of our deeds and our forebears' deeds in the previous existence. The Vietnamese concept of fate is a happy blending of the Confucian concept of Heaven's decree and the Buddhist theory of Karma.

In the Vietnamese mind, fate does not preclude man's efforts and will. Misfortune and happiness are not eternal. The man who has an unfavorable fate can, by his endeavor, perseverance, and good deeds bring about change and obtain reward from Heaven. On the other hand, the man with a favorable fate will prepare his own downfall by living an unworthy life. Heaven's justice is epitomized in the principle of cause and effect. Happiness or suffering results from one's own deeds, will, and endeavor.

SUPERSTITIONS

The Vietnamese common man, especially when he is uneducated, tends to believe in omens, ghosts and supernatural influences. Whatever their professed religions, most Vietnamese are influenced at one time or another in their life by magic, fortune-telling, and horoscopes. It is commonly believed that a man's destiny is determined by the positioning of a particular star in the heavens on his birth date. By consulting his horoscope, a man can avoid disaster during inauspicious periods and make the most of auspicious periods. It was usual for Vietnamese people to consult an astrologer when they had to choose a date for wedding or funeral ceremonies or for taking up a business. On special days of the month, one must avoid doing certain things lest one should meet with failure or accidents. Although the reaction against irrational thinking and superstitious practices is strong, superstition seems to exert a strong influence on the mind of the Vietnamese common people.

Appendix 12

THE CULT OF THE ANCESTORS

By Phạm Qùynh

Humanity is made up more of the dead than the living, Auguste Comte has said. This remark of the French positivist philosopher is still truer in the country of Vietnam than anywhere else. The Cult of the Ancestors, indeed, holds an important place in our family and social life. It was set up as a sort of religious dogma and, in a certain sense, as a true national religion. If the religion is, as its etymology indicates, the spiritual bond which unites man to supernatural forces, the cult or the religion of the dead is the demonstration of the relations which exist between the world of the living and that of the dead. The relations are numerous and continuing. The dead intervene at every moment in the life of the living; the souls guide them, direct them, protect them, assist them, inspire their thoughts and their conduct, follow them, so to speak, with their eyes, their invisible eyes which cut through the secrets of life and of death and which are perhaps the sole means by which humanity could have some brief vision of its future and its destiny; in short, the souls live in their memory, in their interest, in their dreams of life still more intense than their earthly life.

What is the nature of these relations between the living and the dead which make up one of the most vital factors in the Vietnamese religion? On the basis of what belief does this religion of the dead stand? What are its ritual and, so to speak, practical demonstration? What is the moral and philosophical lesson one may derive from them?

Confucius, who is at one and the same time the Socrates, the Solon and the Lycurgus of the Oriental city, speaks often of the spirits and the souls of the dead. It is true that in his *Philosophical Conversations* with his disciples, he declines sometimes to give his own views as to their compositions; one knows the response which he made to one of them who queried him on the subject: *You do not know how to serve the living, why should I teach you to serve the dead? You who understand nothing of life, why should I speak to you about death?* But we know, in another connection, that in this matter, the master remained faithful to the beliefs of ancient China, traces of which are notably kept for us in *The Book of Rites*. According to these beliefs, man is made up of the living soul and the spiritual soul. After death, the living soul turns to dust with the body. The spiritual soul rises, wanders in space and leads an independent, ethereal, airy life. This is the life of the spirits, of the souls, of the departed ancestors. These then never die completely; they follow a transcendent, spiritual life. But this life which runs the risk of becoming ineffectual, of evaporating into nothing, is made more real,

more effective, so to say, by the memory the living keep of the dead, by the cult which it is their duty to offer. It is thus that the dead may always participate in the life of their family, of their descendents. One calls on them for all solemn occasions, such as births, marriages and so on.

The cult of the souls of the departed ancestors dates back to early antiquity. Confucius reports in the *Luận-Ngữ* that Emperor Vu, one of the first semi-fictional, semi-historical rulers of China, so restrained in his personal wants, was extremely liberal when he made the offering to the souls. *In the spring and in the autumn,* says Confucius, in the *Trung Dung, the ancients decorate the temple of their ancestors. They put on display the utensils which the departed had used, and the clothes which they had worn. They offered them the freshly prepared dishes and fruits in season.*

I said earlier that Confucius remained faithful to this ancient religion, to these old beliefs of ancient China, all the more since they fit in admirably with his doctrine of social conservatism based on the cult of the past and of tradition.

But did he himself believe in the existence of the souls? Did he believe in their real presence in the ceremonies and the invocations? From what emanates from his words, always prudently chosen when he concerns himself with such questions of a metaphysical order, doubt is allowable.

We have seen the answer that he made to one of his disciples on death. Here is what he said to another who questioned him on discretion: *To fulfil the duties appertaining to man, to honor the spirits, but to hold one's distance, that could be called discretion.*

To honor the spirits, but to hold oneself at a distance, that is the attitude of the sage in regard to divinity.

It is possible that the souls and the spirits exist; it is probable that they do not exist. One thing is certain, that is, we should honor them. Let us do it in all sincerity, without superstition and fanaticism, as we perform a ritual of high moral and social importance.

This ritual, in fact, is demanded by filial piety, which in the politico-moral system of Confucius, is the basic of all virtues, the foundation of family morals, and consequently of society and of the empire.

Under these conditions, how is it necessary to honor the dead, and of all the dead, those which concern us most directly, our ancestors?

The *Book of Rites* credited Confucius with this saying: *To treat the dead as dead would be unhuman. One must not do it. But to treat them as living would be foolish. One must not do it.* One is not then to treat the dead as dead, that is to say to concern oneself no more with them, to forget them; one is not to treat them as living either, that is to say, to believe that they really live. In fact, they do live in our memory, by the liveness, the intensity of the sentiment that is called filial piety and which

leads to the worship of those to whom one owes one's life and one's conscience, to carry on, to perpetuate their memory, to pass on the colt indefinitely to our descendents, giving us the illusion, a salutary illusion, of the continuity, perenniality and immortality, of this phantom existence, in this passing world.

Here is how the intimate thought of the master should be interpreted. Respectful of tradition and of rituals, he did not wish to explain himself fully on this subject. But such should be his thought. The cult of the dead is, in his eyes, the cult of memory, based upon filial piety and the thought of the continuity of the family and of the race. And it is in this spirit that it is still being practiced by the majority of the Oriental world, for whom it is the main religion and takes the place of all preachings revealed or supernatural.

This cult is surrounded with the practice of different rituals that it would be idle to enumerate here. One knows, besides, that each Vietnamese family, rich or poor, has an altar for the ancestors which could be a magnificent place of worship, or a simple dais stand on two saw-horses. It is there that the funerary tablets of all the deceased ancestors dating back five generations repose. These are the object of particular ceremonies on the days in memory of the date of their death and of all the ritual fetes of the year. The others, the remote ancestors are represented on a communal tablet and receive worship on definite ritual days which are also numerous during the year. Two days are especially dedicated to the dead: the 9th day of the third month (*Thanh Minh*), that is the day for visiting the tombs; this day of the dead has nothing gloomy about it and takes place at one of the prettiest times of the year when:

"The new grass stretching out to the vast horizon.
The pear-tree branch grows white with its tender fleece..."

Thus it is said in the well-known poem of Kiều.

To this day of the dead, called the weed-digging of the tombs, is added ordinarily a day of the living, for the idea of death, and it is something to note, has nothing gloomy about it in this country.

The second day reserved for the dead is the 15th day of the 7th month. This is rather a Buddhist festival, dedicated to the wandering souls, to all those who died without descendents to keep their cult alive. For the greatest misfortune which could happen to a man, is to see one day his cult broken, by posterity's default, and to become thus a wandering soul to whom Buddhist charity grants an impersonal and anonymous cult.

Thus the persons who died without direct male descendents to continue their cult are authorized by Vietnamese law to choose in their close kinship what one calls, a founded cult. One can see by this how

much the idea of the cult is long-lived in the hearts of the Vietnamese. The cult of the dead is essentially a cult of ancestors.

Confucius said: *To make offerings to the souls who are not of your own family, is rank flattery.*

Each individual, each family ought to make offerings to his own ancestors, not to the others. If someone makes the offerings to the souls who are not his, it is evidently done to obtain a favor, to which one is not entitled: illegal seizure of good fortune. (Wieger).

Then, in principle, each one has only the cult to offer to his own dead ancestors. But there are those men, who during their lifetime, have granted many favors to their fellow citizens, who have been the benefactors of their village, of their province, of the entire country; there are the rulers and the ministers who have been the architects of national grandeur; the generals who have saved the country from foreign invasion; the great scholars who have honored the nation by their intelligence and their talents; the men and women who died to save honor and virtue; these have the right to let their fellow citizens perpetuate their memory and to worship them. It is thus that the villages respect them as their guardian spirits; that their original province, that the whole country build temples at places their memory has made famous. This is equally a form of the cult of ancestors; not only the common ancestors of a village, of a city, of the nation. It is the cult of the protecting spirits of the country and it is already, in a certain sense, the cult of great men, of heroes so praised by Carlyle.

Here is the cult of the dead as it is understood and practised in this land of Vietnam.

Being given its main importance in the constitution of the family and of the Vietnamese city, and the detailed and complicated rituals which surround it, it constitutes a true religion, the religion of the family and of the race, a religion of memory and of gratitude. It is, certainly, a national religion, logical, consistent with reason and with sentiment, carrying a minimum of mysticism to satisfy the religious souls and a maximum of reason to content all the positive souls. It is a philosophical religion and the Vietnamese people are honored to have always practised it, for bygone centuries.

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Chapter XII

MAN'S EXPRESSION ABOUT HIS RELATIONS TO HIMSELF AND TO OUTER WORLD

The Vietnamese common man's perception of his relations with himself, other people, and nature is often reflected in his everyday language. In the foregoing chapters, we witnessed some linguistic illustrations of the Vietnamese concept of the family, society, values, and philosophy of life. This perception is more directly expressed in literature, music and theater.

LITERATURE

Oral Literature

Vietnam has a long tradition of literature. As with any other nation in the world, this tradition started with folk literature handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Oral literature consists of proverbs, folk ballads and folk tales which express the feelings, emotions, hopes, aspirations and world view of the Vietnamese common man. It is not possible to identify the authors of those literary products which were undoubtedly composed by some individuals but repolished by the community through the process of oral transmission, due to creative urge or adaptive needs. Wandering minstrels who earned their living by singing folk ballads and folk tales, oarsmen and boat girls who sang folk lyrics in the moonlight, farmers who exchanged folk songs while working in the rice fields, all those people helped keep folk literature alive.

Written literature

Written literature consists of two kinds: literature composed in Chinese and literature composed in Vietnamese.

Literature in Chinese

The first written literary products of Vietnam were in Chinese and dated back to the Chinese domination period. Since there was no writing system to record the Vietnamese language all written literature had to be composed and recorded in Chinese characters. This type of literature started during the Chinese domination period, prospered during the Independence Era and

lasted until the end of the nineteenth century.

Under the national dynasties, the climate was favorable for the development of literature. Writers and poets were held in high regards. The kings were the main patrons of literature. Under the Lý and Trần dynasties (11th-14th centuries), several poems were composed by Buddhist monks and court officials. Most prominent among the latter were Lý-Thường-Kiệt and Trần-Quốc-Tuấn, the national heroes who defeated the Chinese invading armies in the 11th and 13th centuries. Such emperors as Lý Thái Tông and Lý Nhân Tông were also famous for their poetical works.

It was under the Trần dynasty that the first history of Vietnam, *Đại Việt Sử Ký* was written by Lê-Văn-Hưu.

Literature attained a high degree of development under the Lê dynasty. King Lê-Thánh-Tôn (1460-1497) established a literary circle called Tao-Đàn, which he compared to a constellation of twenty-eight stars. Among the most prominent poets of the time were Nguyễn-Trãi (1380-1442), who was also remembered as the author of the famous *Bình Ngô Đại Cáo* ("Proclamation on the Victory over the Chinese Invasion Troops"); and Nguyễn-Bỉnh-Khiêm (1541-1585) often considered as the Nostradamus of the East. Đặng-Trần-Côn (1710-1745) wrote a long lyric poem, *Chinh Phụ Ngâm* ("A Plaintive Ballad of a Warrior's Wife"), which depicted the sorrows and anguish of a young beautiful wife who was waiting for the return of her husband who had gone to war and was never to return. In prose, Ngô-Sĩ-Liên wrote a comprehensive history of Vietnam, *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* and Nguyễn Du wrote *Truyền Kỳ Mạn Lục*, a collection of marvelous tales which reflect the life in Vietnam in a troubled period of civil strife. Lê-Quí-Đôn (1726-1784) left many masterpieces, both in prose and poetry, such as the history book *Đại Việt Thông Sử* and the collection of poems *Quế Đường Thi Tập*.

It was under the Nguyễn dynasty that Vietnamese literature in Chinese reached its apogee with such works as the history books *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* and *Khâm Định Việt Sử* and such collections of poems as *Cao Chu Tần Thi Tập* by Cao Bá Quát, *Thảo Đường Thi Tập* by Phạm Quý Thích and *Bắc Hành Thi Tập* by Nguyễn Du. The Nguyễn dynasty also witnessed the decline and death of literature written in Chinese and the study of Chinese characters and Chinese classics in Vietnam.

Literature in Vietnamese

Based on the writing system used to record literary works, we distinguish two categories: literature written in "Chữ-nôm"

or the demotic script based on Chinese characters and literature written in *Quốc Ngữ*, or the roman alphabet.

Literature in Chữ-Nôm

The need of a writing system to represent the Vietnamese language led to the creation of *Chữ-nôm*, the demotic writing system based on Chinese characters (see Chapter V). It is not possible to tell when and by whom *Chữ-nôm* was created. It is believed that this system of writing was used as early as the Chinese Domination period. However, the earliest written document in *chữ-nôm* extant came from a 13th century writer, Nguyễn Thuyên, who wrote the *Văn Tế Cá Sấu* ("Orison for the Crocodiles"). Among the pioneers in the *Chữ-nôm* literature were Nguyễn Sĩ Cố and Chu Văn An in the 14th century.

This kind of literature reached its zenith during the 16th - 19th centuries. Phan Huy Ích and Đoàn Thị Điểm adapted *Chinh Phụ Ngâm* written in Chinese by Đặng Trần Côn into a Vietnamese ballad noted for its musicality and great sensitivity. Nguyễn Bỉnh Khiêm wrote hundreds of poems extolling the happiness of a secluded life aloof from the strife of the time. Nguyễn Gia Thiều (1741-1798) wrote *Cung Oán Ngâm Khúc* ("Plaintive Ballad of an Odalisk") which voiced the sorrows and despair of a beautiful young women condemned to waste her youth and beauty in the royal harem. Critics have agreed that the masterpiece of the literature in *Chữ-nôm* was a long narrative poem called *Kim Vân Kiều* by Nguyễn Du (1765-1820), who depicted the tragic fate of a beautiful and talented young woman named Thúy Kiều who became the victim of an unjust and corrupted society and who had to sacrifice her love to fulfill the obligation of filial piety. *Kim Vân Kiều* has become the most popular literary work and there is no single Vietnamese who does not know this poem or who cannot recite a few passages from it. There were also several long narrative poems of value during this period, such as *Nhị Độ Mai*, *Phan Trần*, *Lục Vân Tiên*, *Hoa Tiên*, and *Bích Câu Kỳ Ngộ*. Mention should be made of three distinguished women poets who represented three main tendencies in Vietnamese literature of the period. Đoàn Thị Điểm, the poetess of the heart, represented the romantic trend prevailing in the works of Nguyễn Gia Thiều and Nguyễn Du. Bà Huyện Thanh Quan with her lofty and dignified style represented the classical trend and the Chinese influence in Vietnamese literature. Hồ Xuân Hương with her spicy language full of "double entendre" and her discussion of taboo subjects represented the movement of social protest and

satire in literature.

Literature in Quốc Ngữ

The creation of the roman alphabet to represent the Vietnamese language called *quốc-ngữ* by European missionaries in the 16th century (see Chapter V) was a great contribution to the development of Vietnamese literature written in the vernacular. During the three centuries that followed its creation, *quốc ngữ* was restricted to the small circle of clergymen who used this new writing system to translate the Bible into Vietnamese. The roman alphabet was not used by common people or poets and writers who clung to Chinese characters and the demotic system of writing. Attempts to popularize the roman alphabet took place only at the end of the 19th century. At the end of the First World War *quốc ngữ* gained the status of a national writing system.

The first newspaper printed in the roman alphabet was published in 1865 but it took fifty years for the *quốc ngữ* to become a popular medium of literary creation. Among the pioneers of literature in *quốc ngữ* were Trương Vĩnh Ký (1837–1898), Huỳnh Tịnh Của (1834- 1907), Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh (1882-1936), Phan Kế Bính (1857-1921), Nguyễn Khắc Hiếu (1889-1939) and Phạm Quỳnh (1892-1945).

Vietnamese prose written in *quốc ngữ* showed two distinct tendencies: one towards didactic literature, the other towards fiction. Nguyễn Văn Ngọc, Trần Trọng Kim, Ngô Tất Tố, Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Trương Tửu, and Nguyễn Bách Khoa contributed to the elaboration and development of the scientific and philosophical thought in the vernacular. The novel reflected Vietnamese society and its problems and the impact of Western culture on Vietnamese traditional culture. In the early thirties, Nguyễn Tường Tam (pen-name Nhất Linh) founded *Tự Lực Văn Đoàn*, a literary circle which advocated in their works the individual's emancipation from traditionalism. Khái-Hưng, Thạch Lam, Hoàng Đạo, Thế Lữ were other well-known members of this literary group. *Tự Lực Văn Đoàn* was also credited with the introduction of a new style in poetry, *thơ mới* or modern poetry, freed from the influence of Chinese prosody. The names of such well-known poets as Thế Lữ, Xuân Diệu, Huy Cận, Lưu Trọng Lư, Chế Lan Viên and Tú Mỡ are associated with this new style of poetry.

The period between the two World Wars witnessed the rapid growth of Vietnamese literature written in *quốc-ngữ*. Literary works, both in prose and in poetry and representing different

literary trends, were published in abundance. Masterpieces of foreign literatures, especially Chinese, French and English, were translated into Vietnamese. The coming of age of Vietnamese literature in *quốc-ngữ* also brought about the end of Chinese and *chữ-nôm* as media of literary creation.

Literature in the period following the Second World War was noted for its revolutionary themes of nationalism and anti-colonialism which reflected the struggle for independence of the Vietnamese people. With the Communist regime, literature and other forms of art were tightly controlled and geared towards the theory of Marxism for the service of the Communist party.

MUSIC

Music plays an important role in the life of the Vietnamese, the rich like the poor, the learned like the uneducated. It is used to lull a child to sleep, to accompany work and play, and as a component of rites and celebrations. Popular music has a rich heritage, each locality has its own characteristics. The North has such styles of music as *hát chèo, sa-mạc, quan họ, trống quân*, the Center has *nam-ai, nam-bình, and hò-mái-nhì*, and the South has *vọng-cổ* and *cải lương*. The music of the North is marked with gaiety and vivacity while the music of the Center and the South has a languishing and melancholic rhythm. Western influence is obvious in the new type of music called *tân nhạc*, or modern music, which has become very popular, especially among the younger generation.

THEATER

The theater is a popular form of art in Vietnam. It usually expresses the history, traditions, values and cultural heritage of the Vietnamese people. There are three main types of theatrical performance.

Hát bội (traditional theater) is the Vietnamese adaptation of the Chinese opera. It can be traced back to the 11th century when Chinese immigrants were hired to teach actors to play before the court. No scenery is used in this type of theater. Actors' makeup, gestures, and costume compensate for the barren stage. Usually facial make-ups identify the role of the characters. Gestures are stylized and their meaning is familiar to the audience. Plots are drawn from Vietnamese and Chinese history and used as a means for moral and social education of

the common people: the wicked and disloyal are always punished and the brave and loyal always rewarded with victory and fame. Consequently, the lyrics are more important than the music in this kind of theater.

Cải lương (renovated theater) is usually a comedy of manners but the dialogue is interspersed with songs accompanied by an orchestra. This type of theater is characterized by sentimentality and realism. The characters are more human than in the *hát bội* in the sense that they are not heroes but common mortals. The superhuman element is seldom found in this type of theater. The sweetness of the performer's voice and her singing ability are more important than her acting ability.

Kịch (modern theater) is the Vietnamese adaptation of the modern French comedy. It is a play in prose discourse without any accompanying song and music. Although of a more recent origin, *kịch* has become more and more popular with the Vietnamese common man.

Literature, music, and the theater provide an excellent avenue to explore Vietnamese culture. The ways in which the Vietnamese people feel, believe, and behave are reflected in such art forms as folk tales, proverbs, folk ballads, novels, poems, popular songs and plays.

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